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Bombay Blackens Its Record

Sikhs Attacked Following Vaidya Assassination

Jyoti Punwani Reports

It took just 15 minutes to blacken Bombay's record of having been the one big city with a sizable Sikh population, where Sikhs remained unharmed after Mrs Gandhi's assassination in November 1984. And those 15 minutes, in which 9 Sikhs were attacked, seemed to have been sufficient to enure Bombayites to this new communal violence, which has already claimed one life. For there has been not a word of public condemnation against it, with the result that ordinary Sikhs feel insecure and isolated in the city where many of them have been born.

Police bandobast had been provided to gurdwaras and Sikh-dominated residential and commercial areas, following the bandhs in Thane and Mulund on Monday, August 11 the day after Gen Vaidya's murder. The bandhs spread towards town on Tuesday but till the evening, nothing had happened, making everybody feel that Bombay would live up to its reputation. But between 6.30 and 7 pm, when most shopkeepers were busy closing shop, the assailants struck. The pattern was the same in the two areas which they attacked almost simultaneously. Between 15 and 20 persons armed with knives, iron rods, hockey sticks and lathis rushed towards their victims, hitting and stabbing at random, saying nothing, looting nothing. The attacks took place at Opera House, where Sikhs dominate the auto spare parts market, and Carnac Bunder, where they form a large section of the transport operators. Police could not prevent these attacks as they were reportedly posted on the main roads, not in the by-lanes. Two Sikhs were also attacked at Girgaum, a predominantly Hindu area; one of them escaped unhurt.

Planned Attacks; Hired Assailants

That the attacks were planned is evident from their nature; that the assailants were hired is evident from the absence of any looting, as well as the inclusion of one Hindu among those attacked. Mr Juneja had pulled down his shutters hearing the hue and cry on his street at Opera House; the assailants prised the shutters open, were unsuccessful at hitting his two sons, but hit him in three pla-

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Courtesy: Statesman

Warning Signals in Gorkhaland

W. Bengal, Union Governments Allowing Dangerous Drift

Harji Malik

The Gorkhaland movement which has suddenly flared up into violence, and threatens to destabilize yet another part of the sensitive north-east, has a long history behind it. The Gorkha leader, Shubas Gheising, is openly advocating militant means if necessary to achieve his ends. The Union government, perhaps with party interests in mind, is allowing the situation to drift dangerously.

Will Gorkhaland be the 24th or 25th state of the Indian Union? Or is the Gorkhaland demand a bargaining point for regional autonomy? Or is this the start of a new insurgency, born out of the vote-oriented tactics of the Congress (I) and Left Front governments of West Bengal? We should have the answer in the next few months, perhaps sooner. For Subhash Gheising, the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front leader, seems to be calling the shots in Darjeeling district and the climate of violence he has nurtured has reached explosion point.

On 27th July, 12 persons were killed in police firing in Kalimpong when GNLFF supporters clashed with the CRP. For the next six days life was paralysed in Darjeeling district in the GNLFF called, unprecedented, 108 hour bandh. Tea and tourism, the mainstay of the local economy, suffered heavy losses. The police arrested many GNLFF sup-

porters and Gheising went underground, his position further strengthened by the Kalimpong deaths which heightened already inflamed passions in the district.

Supporters of the relatively moderate All India Gorkha League were reported to have switched over to the GNLFF and a large section of Congress (I) supporters announced their support for the Gorkhaland movement as long as it was not secessionist.

Six months ago, Subhash Chandra Tamang, better known as Subhas Gheising, was unknown outside of Darjeeling district. Today, the 50 year old ex-Gurkha Rifles agitator politician leads a popular movement which could destabilize yet another part of the sensitive, strategic north-east, and which has already undermined the political base of the CPI(M) in the area. It has caught the imagination and hearts of the majority of

India's six million Nepali speaking citizens, which includes 40,000 ex-servicemen. The impact of the movement on the thousands of serving Gorkhas in the Indian army is not known.

Historical background of the agitation

The Gorkhaland agitation seems to have sprung up in full fledged militancy, like the mythical warriors from the dragon's teeth. One day there was nothing, the next, it seems, headlines screamed of death and violence. This is far from the truth. The call for greater autonomy for the Nepali speaking people of the area, in some form or other, including separation from Bengal, goes back to the early years of this century. The Gorkhaland demand is the culmination of years of frustration, with the concerned authorities dealing with legitimate grievances and ethnic resentment, either in cavalier fashion, or by ignoring them altogether. Gheising himself has been in local politics since 1968 when he founded the *Neelo Jhanda Party* and his Gorkhaland National Liberation Front was formed in 1980, six years ago.

But it is the often repeated, familiar story of missed op-

portunities, political opportunism and insensitivity to local sentiments. Darjeeling is far from Delhi and political parties have been concerned more with their own short term advantages than with the country's long term interests. Even today, with the warning signals flashing red imperatively, with violence already in the streets, with passions being fanned to what could be an uncontrollable pitch, the governments in Calcutta and Delhi are sparing for political advantage.

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Sex, Exposés and the Magazines

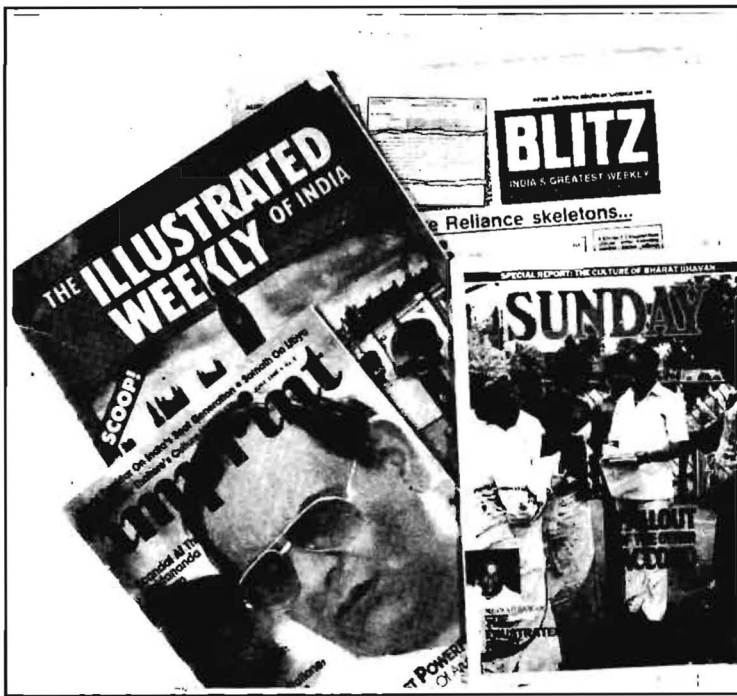
Preminder Singh

Shake any tree in India and something rotten seems to fall off it whether it is 'Only Ambani' or 'Prince Charming'. Whether it is 'spiritual conmen peddling their instant nirvana' or 'The Sick Society'. Whether we are talking about 'The abasement of the legal system or whether we want to know all there is not know about J. B. Patnaik'. Whether we want to hear about our film stars who are 'stingy and cheap' or about our Press with its 'slave reporter culture' — something stinks in the state of Denmark.

During the last couple of months while the national newspapers have been doling out their daily dose of terrorism, the weeklies, fortnightly and monthlies have been quietly demolishing the legal system, business, banking, politics, administration, religion and the press. While the nation's anger mounts at the anti-nationalism of the Sikhs and the Gurkhas, upstanding patriots of the likes of Ambanis, Chandra Swamy Scindias and Patnaiks continue motion by our patrons of cult-country.

Unparalleled Swindles

The stunning rise and fall of Reliance Textiles figures as the cover story in four magazines: IMPRINT (July 86), INDIA TODAY (Aug 15), GENTLEMAN (9 Aug 86) and BLITZ (June 21 & July 5). It is not only a story of backdated Letters of Credit, illegal investments from off-shore companies and fraudulent bank loans. It is the story of "business and the subversion of the Indian State" (IMPRINT) It is not only about "The meteoric rise of the Reliance group to the pinnacle of monopoly power ... fuelled by a series of swindles of a magnitude unparalleled in the annals of corporate fraud in this country" (BLITZ) but about how like in "Germany and Japan corporations ... advance their own commercial interests to a point where the community, the bureaucracy and the politician become accessories to



the ambitions and designs of the corporations" (IMPRINT)

The "Great Reliance Golmal" as BLITZ called it, left no institution untouched. Since Goenka launched his attack in the INDIAN EXPRESS in April followed by BLITZ in June and July and IMPRINT in July and August, the trail of destruction has led right upto the top. Ex-Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee is implicated. So is a deputy manager of the Reserve Bank. Three managers of the Canara Bank have been sacked. Eight banks are under investigation for violating Reserve Bank guidelines. It seemed as if the whole country had been bought and we had arrived at the level of American capitalism where "what is good for General Motors is good for America" was going to be our philosophy. Luckily the financial correspondent of BLITZ arrived just on time.

"The Finance Ministry", he informed us "has formally announced its independence from the Reliance regime. A spokesperson for the Ministry told a fully packed press conference that the struggle would continue till the last debenture is dissolved.

The Government of India had recognized the liberation struggle of the Finance Ministry, the spokesperson said, adding that Delhi had invited the leader of the nationalist guerrilla front Wee P. Singh for discussions. The Ministry was also seeking recognition from the IMF, World Bank and the Aid India Consortium as an independent entity.

"It may be recalled that Reliance had refused to grant independence to its colonial possessions in the Finance Min-

istry despite repeated appeals by national leaders and other business interests."

"Prince Charming"

Next on the firing line was "Prince Charming" Madhavrao Scindia, "who looks after the Railway Ministry, in addition to the Scindia wealth." The ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY (Aug 10) discovered him calling London on his cordless phone enquiring about his inheritance which seems to have mysteriously shrunk from £ 350,000 to £ 250,000 since 1961. While sympathising with the plight of Maharajas after the abolition of privy purses in the late sixties, one cannot extend the same sympathy to a central government minister who has been "stubbornly refusing to repatriate his foreign assets to India ... And the authorities, who in the recent past have shown a rare boldness to strike at even the mightiest captains of industry for violations of the foreign exchange regulation act, seem to be paralysed and have been able to do precious little in the matter".

A 'Governmental' Swami

Maybe the government was too busy dealing with their new religious find, India's jet-set guru, friend to needy millionaires, international wheeler-dealer, the "latest in a saffron star line of Indian Godmen ... Chandra Swamy who leaves Rajneesh, Mahesh Yogi and Dharendra Brahmachari looking like poor relations." INDIA TODAY (Aug 15)

Chandra Swamy was involved in the sale of Harrods in which he first collected a quarter of a million dollars and then another cool 5 million for introducing

his friend Egyptian, millionaire Mohammed al Fayad, the Sultan of Brunei and later selling secretly taped conversations with al Fayad to his detractors. Rajat Sharma ONLOOKER 31st July and Pritish Nandy WEEKLY 20th July, 'trapped' and 'exposed' him to revealing himself as a pathetic liar, conman and fraud. But there still remains the small questions of foreign exchange violations and with devotees like Human Resources Development Minister Narasimha Rao and ex Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari, we wonder if justice will be done.

Sex and

Perverse Politicians

Corrupt politicians in this country are a dime a dozen. Crooked chief ministers are not entirely unknown. Homosexuality is not unheard of. Let's face it, even sexual perversion exists. But when all these qualities combine in one leader, then we have indeed the 'Man of the year' J.B. Patnaik, Congress Chief Minister of Orissa for over six years is indeed unique. In a shocking, almost obscene expose of the Chief Minister the WEEKLY (May 18) revealed "stories of his alleged libidinal involvement with a series of women. And men. Which makes his private affairs doubly fascinating ... (as well as the public life of his state), "Orissa leads the country in the number of rapes and sexual crimes."

SUNDAY (20 July) found "The history of Janaki Ballav Patnaik's achievements is a history of corruption, misdemeanours, nepotism and maladministration. He is the most corrupt Chief Minister ... no other leader has promoted so many of his relatives as blatantly as Mr. Patnaik ... but charges of corruption hardly disturb the high command"

And So It Goes On

And so it goes on. IMPRINT Aug 86 quotes Chief Justice Bhagwati observing "that the judicial system is almost on the verge of collapse ... our adjudicatory system is creaking under the weight of arrears. "But it is not only the lack of good judges and better pay, "it is the result of multiplication of grievances as a result of the growing arbitrariness of administration ... and a torrent of ill conceived and inequitable legislation." Imprint also finds "The Indian journalist ... a slave reporter of authority ... he is purchasable with suit pieces, gifts, booze, the opportunity to travel."

In case anyone is depressed there are always the sports pages.

From Gitanjali: Song of Offerings

Rabindranath Tagore



Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost.

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

This is my prayer to thee, my lord—strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.

Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.

Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.

Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.

And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.

The Forum Gazette

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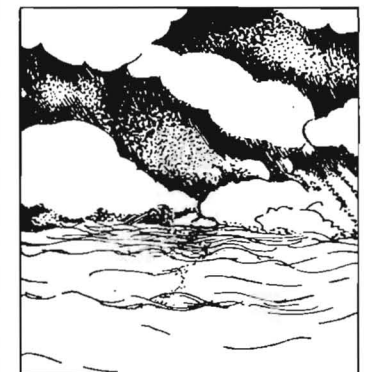
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NEWSHOUND



By Rap



DELHI SIKHS READY TO LEAVE

Harmindar Kaur

The second wave of violence in Delhi following the Muktsar killings in the last week of July has left a large number of Sikhs shattered, particularly in West Delhi, which was the target of Hindu militant organisations this time. Those who have not yet recovered from the trauma of the November 1984 carnage fear another

to take any more chances in the capital. Gurmeet Singh fractured his leg in the police firing outside B-Block in Tilak Vihar in July this year. He repairs television sets and had gone to B-Block on a repair mission. When he came out he was hit by a police bullet in his right thigh. He wants to leave for Punjab as soon as his plaster is removed.

remarked Surjit Kaur. Surrinder Kaur, whose five-and-a-half year old daughter is studying in Nainital was a witness to her father's brutal murder. Said Surrinder Kaur, "Had Amandeep been here she couldn't have survived the riot. She is under so much trauma that even the slightest reference to the riot gives her a fit."



Top: Shammi Bai: "Let them tell us once for all if they want us or not."

Right: Surinder Kaur: "My daughter would not have survived this riot."



Many Sikhs who settled in Delhi after partition do not wish to migrate but say they are being pushed to leave. Threatening letters have been sent to many Sikhs saying that they must stop killings by terrorists in Punjab or face the consequences here.

Transfers Within Delhi

At the same time there are many who feel it is safer to live in Sikh majority areas with Delhi. People are selling their houses in Lajpat Nagar, Fateh Nagar and Jail Road. On the other hand Hindu families living in Sikh dominated areas feel equally insecure and have started moving out. Sikhs from Kanpur, Bihar and Maharashtra are also on the move.

It is a very painful decision for Sikhs who have lived all their lives in Delhi. It is equally difficult to start a living in Punjab all over again. Some have found solutions to this also. Daljit Singh, a resident of Janak-

their hair but feel there is still no respite for them. Sarabjit Singh, who cut his hair after the November riots shifted to Ludhiana some seven months ago. He returned to Delhi to persuade his relatives to join him. He was arrested following riots in Tilak Nagar. When this reporter met him, he remarked bitterly: "Neither can we go around in turbans nor without turbans. They don't arrest terrorists but harass and humiliate innocents like us." His equally bitter cousin Manjit Singh intoned, "A time will come when Sikhs outside Punjab will not even get food. We must not wait for such a day to come if there is any self-pride and dignity left among us."

Police Indifference

The recurrence of riots in Delhi has caused tremendous insecurity. One of the prime reasons is the police indifference. It is widely felt that the police instigates rather than prevents a riot.

"In Tilak Nagar there was curfew only for the Sikhs. Even our children were not allowed to move out but all Hindu miscreants could move around without any check and set fire to Sikh houses, shops and even religious places. They kill and then give Rs 10,000. Is that the worth of a Sikh life?" queried Surinder Kaur

Lack of Leadership

A great deal of insecurity among Sikhs outside Punjab also springs from lack of leadership in the community. Little is expected from Zail Singh, he being a titular head while both Buta Singh and Jathedar Rachpal Singh are considered to be power-brokers.

Whatever the reasons, the unfortunate process of the migration of Hindus from Punjab and of Sikhs from outside Punjab has begun. Though it is not difficult to imagine the ultimate outcome, the question remains who does it suit? Neither the Hindus nor the Sikhs nor the country. And yet it seems there is no political will to contain this dangerous phenomenon. ●



A Hindu 'refugee' family from Punjab: In Delhi ... away from home.

reprisal is in the offing. "Whatever is happening leaves us with no choice but to go to 'unjab'" bemoans Gurmukh Singh, a former driver with the Delhi Transport Corporation. "We first saw the dead bodies of our parents in Pakistan, then of our children in November 1984. We cannot go on getting our families killed like this."

Shammi Bai, a migrant from Sultanpuri, who lost seven members during the November riots said, "We migrated from Alwar (Rajasthan) for a good living. But here there is only death for us. If they don't want us, let them tell us once and for all. We have young girls. We are scared to live here."

Jaswant Singh shifted his flour mill to Tilak Vihar from Block-32 of Trilokpuri after seeing some 400 people being done to death in November 1984. He has already sold his house in Gandhi Nagar and is now waiting to sell his flour mill. "I can start the same business in Punjab. I don't want my family massacred here," he says.

Insecurity in Delhi

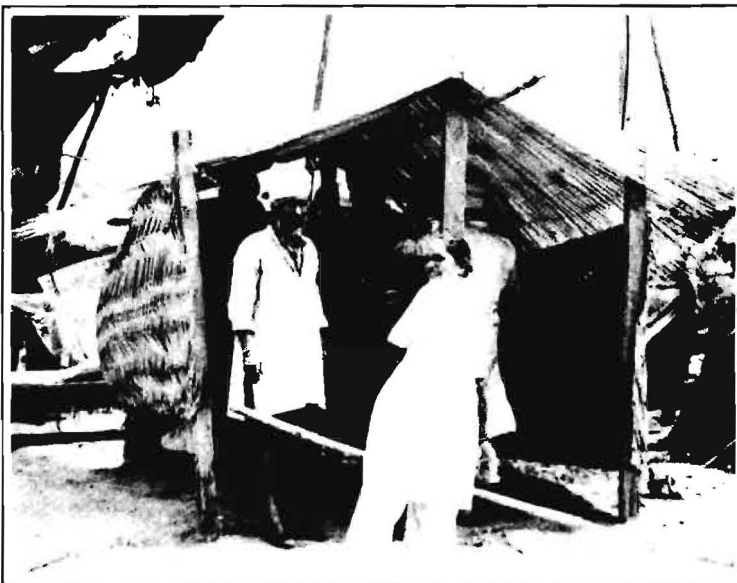
The two riots have caused so much insecurity that some do not wish to visit Delhi even for family functions. Satpal Singh's daughter is to be married this November. But he says, "Her in-laws have told us they would solemnise the wedding only if we perform it in Ambala."

Apprehending things will turn for the worst many do not want

The family shifted here from Gurgaon in Haryana after their house was reduced to cinders during the November riots. "I have labour-oriented work. I have specialised in repair of colour television sets. There is enough work in Punjab for me. Even if there was less, I would go. It is better to earn less and live with dignity rather than earn more and face bullets and harassment for no fault of yours."

Disturbed Children

A lot of children, who were a witness to the November carnage are compelling their parents to leave for Punjab. "Our children cannot bear to see even the slightest disturbance"



Ready to leave

Gurmeet Singh: "I'm waiting for my plaster to be removed before moving out."



puri has a government job. He has completed 20 years of service and wants to seek voluntary retirement since he will get his pension benefits. His wife will complete 20 years with the Ministry of Defence two-and-a-half-years later. "Our pensions will take care of our basic needs until we start some business in Punjab. But we will at least be free from tensions and insecurity," Said Daljit Singh.

A Mad Man's Dream

Most Sikhs living outside Punjab still feel Khalistan is a mad man's dream but now, many feel, circumstances are forcing one on them. Many have shaven



being higher caste landlords. The traditional local code, i.e., *Dasturul-amal*, prohibits the Kolta from owning land. But its abolition by the State Government has helped the Kolta considerably in acquiring and cultivating land as owner-cultivator.

The Kolta suffer from many handicaps but institutions related to land ownership and tenure are the foundation for their "institutionalised" exploitation. As a result of governmental efforts, a large number of the Kolta now own some land, but their holdings are so small and usually of such poor quality land that they are un-

income. They must depend on others to sustain themselves and are forced to borrow money from Brahmin-Rajput landlords at usurious rates of interest. These vary from 25-60 per cent per annum with another 6¼ per cent deducted from the loan as initial commission for "Ganth Khulal". This means, literally opening the knot in the cloth in which the moneylender traditionally keeps his money. Even those Koltas who are successful in raising loans from co-operative societies for agricultural purposes, usually do not spend the entire money for that specific purpose, because a large part of the money is spent for

illiterate, they have no idea what is being entered in the money lender's account books. They submissively put their thumb impression and that seals their fate. In many cases, these transactions are oral and the Koltas cannot afford to approach a court of law for seeking redress. But even transactions which are recorded in account books, are nothing but legal fiction. Wrong entries and inflated amounts are common and the most a Kolta can do is to call a village panchayat (which is dominated by Rajputs). The Pan-

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Bahaduru: A bonded labourer

The Koltas : Bonded for Ever

Kavaljit Singh

The Kolta are among the worst examples of bonded labour among the Indian tribes. They inhabit the Jaunsarabawar, Rawain and Jaunpur areas of the districts of Dehradun, Uttar Kashi, and Tehri Garhwal — a more or less compact region — of Uttar Pradesh. The

economic system of this region is technologically primitive and cultivation of land is a tradition and way of life for the people. In the local caste hierarchy, the Kolta occupies the lowest place, being untouchable, with artisan groups occupying the middle while Brahmans and Rajputs stand at the apex by virtue of their

economic and cannot provide their owners with two square meals a day throughout the year.

The result is that almost all Kolta households remain impoverished. Unable to generate any surplus from their agricultural activity, they find that expenditure on their bare minimum consumption exceeds their

'unproductive' expenditure like marriages, medical care and expenditure at festivals, etc.

Nothing But Legal Fiction

Always ready to exploit his debtor and use his labour, the landlord — moneylender agrees to advance the loan on certain conditions. Since most Kolta are



Anti-Sikh Violence in Bombay

Continued from page 1, col 1

ces, causing him to be hospitalised with a fracture in the arm.

Those attacked on Tuesday evening were; Gurbaksh Singh Bedi, a bag stall owner at Girgaum, the only Sikh on that lane. He was inside his stall, and hence got away with a cut on his side, and broken window panes. In Opera House, besides Mr Juneja, the victims were: brothers Bhupinder and Harsharan Singh of Shalimar Motors, who were closing their shop and therefore had their backs to the assailants; they were stabbed in the arm and side and stomach and had to be hospitalised; Sohan Singh, who was also hit by lathis; Sardara Singh Kohli, who would have been seriously hurt, had he not pleaded with his assailants: "Mera Kya kusoor hai, mere chhote bachhen hain!" At Carnac Bunder, Inderjit Singh, owner of Maharashtra-Karnatak Transport Service was beaten badly on the head after he resisted his attackers initially. Discharged from hospital after three days, he has been advised medication for two years as there exists a possibility of brain haemorrhage or paralysis. Nearby, at Masjid Bunder, Charanvir Singh and his brother dry fruit dealers, got off lightly as they managed to resist.

Chief Minister Intervenes; Violence Continues

The next day, Sikhs closed their shops in protest, and also met the CM, S.B. Chavan, who assured them that the government would put a stop to the violence, and also made a mention of its in his Independence eve to TV broadcast. But that night, Bakshi Singh Suman, who was returning home after the night shift, from Ghatkopar to Mulund, was surrounded in his train compartment by persons wanting to remove his turban; by the time he reached home, he was unconscious.

However, this incident came

to light much later, and the violence seemed to have subsided after Tuesday. But on Friday night, three Sikhs were again attacked: two of them at the same time on the same street. Tirlochan Singh Bali, a taxi-driver, was asked to stop and stabbed, his face and intestines

hour later. Gurcharan Singh died that night in hospital.

In addition to the attacks, there was a bomb blast in the Pritam Hotel building compound in the early hours of Wednesday morning. Only a few windows were damaged. The



Shattered window panes of the Pritam Hotel in Bombay

were hurt badly. His passengers took him to the nearby police station from where he was brought to hospital unconscious. On the same Shuklaji street in pada, South Bombay, retired Lt Col. K.S. Khara, a wineshop owner, was attacked in his shop, and in distant Chembur, a truck driver, Bhagat Singh, was beaten up by a dozen men with lathis.

Worst Incident and Bomb Blast

The worst incident however, took place on Sunday morning, in Andheri, a northwestern suburb which has a gurdwara. Gurcharan Singh, a middle-aged man who had recently returned from Dubai, was walking home when he was attacked with a butcher's knife in the abdomen, legs and face. He was left lying on the road, to be picked up by a passing Sikh scooterist an

owner of the hotel, Kulwant Singh Kohli, is one of the richest Sikhs in Bombay, and more significantly, is close to Shiv Sena chief Bal Thakeray. And last week on the 21st, the principal of the Guru Nanak High School in Koliwada, the main school of the 23 such schools in the city, received a threat that his school would be blown up. Handwritten in Hindi on lined paper, and addressed to 'Pyare Principal Dost', it was signed 'Hindu Bachav Samiti' and also warned that the popular Shere Punjab restaurant on Lamington Road, gurdwaras, and Koliwada itself would be blown up. (Koliwada is the biggest Sikh Colony in Bombay) "Chhote chhote bachhen mare jayenge" (little children will be killed) the writer warned.

Possible BJP-RSS Connection

It is difficult to say who is

behind the violence. The assailants spoke Marathi and were unknown to the victims. The Sikhs suspect that more than the Shiv Sena, it might be the BJP/RSS or one of its fronts, and are almost sure that Surinder Kumar Billa, the self-styled leader of Hindus from Punjab, who arrived here just before the attacks, is behind them. After more than a week's stay, in which he met Thakeray more than once and invited him to Punjab to help the Hindus, he met a delegation of Sikhs at Thakeray's office and even addressed a press conference where he called for a social boycott of Sikhs. Billa was later asked to leave the city by the police.

While the authorities have reacted promptly to the violence and a few persons have been arrested, Billa appears to have been treated with relative leniency when compared to Badal and Tohra who were recently arrested in Delhi. Moreover the Government has not announced any compensation to the victims.

A number of meetings were held to condemn Vaidy's murder, by different political parties, but the attacks on the Sikhs found no mention. Nor has there been much coverage of the attacks in the press; in fact, the one death has gone unreported but for one paper. The only persons who have been doing something are activists of the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR) and PUCL: they have visited all those in hospital just to show their concern, have sent a team to Pune, and are planning to hold a meeting in Koliwada.

Headline Coverage

On the other hand, the provocative statements of Thakeray and Billa received headline coverage. The day after the Generals' murder, Thakeray announced that he had asked his men to hunt for the killers; three days later, he declared at a pub-

lic function that his party would not tolerate terrorism in Maharashtra. On Friday, he met a group of Sikhs, which included a Congress (I) office bearer, Manohar Singh (whose two brothers were attacked at Opera House) and Pritam Hotel owner K.S. Kohli. Billa was also present at the meeting. One of the next day's papers carried a report of the meeting headlined, "Thakeray asks Sikhs to condemn terrorism" and also quoted him as saying that he had in recent months, often felt like giving a call for the economic boycott of Sikhs, but had restrained himself. Those present at the meeting revealed that Billa had done most of the talking, hurling accusations now routinely made against all Sikhs, but with a new charge: that Bombay's Sikhs were financing the terrorists. Thakeray played the part of the impartial mediator, asking the Sikhs how much longer could he control public anger. He advised them to pressurise Barnala to put a stop to terrorism, and the head priests to issue hukumnamahs (edicts) against the terrorists.

Why Sikhs Visited Thakeray

Why did the Sikhs visit Thakeray? One, due to his 'friendship' with Kulwant Singh Kohli, and two, their feeling that Thakeray had prevented Sikhs from being attacked in November '84, and he could do so again.

Although in most cases, neighbours and employees helped the victims and showed genuine concern, the Sikhs now accept that Bombay too is not totally safe for them, though some of them stoutly deny this.

Most of Bombay's Sikhs settled here after Partition, and have very fragile links with Punjab. But the thought that at least one son must migrate there is taking shape within them. They have also started taking precautions; trying to travel in groups, not lingering in the market late, etc. A climate of uncertainty has gained ground.

Bonded into Prostitution

Harji Malik

Prostitution as a direct consequence of bonded labour has never been fully investigated, and yet it is perhaps the cruellest most contemptible component of this system. The following excerpt is taken from a Report on Media, Women and Prostitution done for UNESCO by the writer.



Photo: Navin Nautiyal

Economic deprivation in some parts of the country has made these areas traditional recruiting grounds for prostitution. One such area is in Uttarkashi district, high up in the Himalayan mountains, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, where low caste, Harijan women are regularly sold as prostitutes in the plains. An Indian Administrative Service officer serving in the area, Robin Gupta, highlighted this practice in a searching report. He exposed the vicious nexus between bonded labour based on indebtedness and prostitution which persists in this extremely poor and backward district. In Purola, the remote area under survey, according to Gupta, the constitutional guarantees for individual human rights are still unknown to the people, and ignored by those officials responsible for seeing that they are implemented. Local revenue officials themselves are intimately involved in the trafficking of women, and the police, who get their cut in the game, turn a blind eye.

Here, unlike the case in some other areas, there is no historical background for this practice. According to various accounts the first woman of Purola Block to leave her village and enter prostitution did so only in 1915. Organised trafficking started after 1940, increasing rapidly after 1947, when new roads and other development of the area, like motor transport, opened it up to officials and traders. Ironically in this case, development introduced human exploitation. In these hills promiscuous sexual behaviour is accepted in local society. But commercialized prostitution is a new phenomenon.

Before Gupta's report a 1969 survey by another official found

that over 60 per cent of the girls from this region were operating in Delhi brothels, and that with the exception of two women, they were from low caste Harijan families. About 500 families were affected by prostitution, because of extreme poverty. In this region, which has a shortage of women, the custom of "bride price" exists instead of

the usual dowry system which is common in most parts of the country. But just as dowry expectations encourage prostitution, so bride price plays a similar role. For, contrary to general belief, bride price here does not give women a higher status in the community. In practise a man often has to go into debt to pay for his

bride, and then, to repay the debt, he turns her into a prostitute.

If a landless Harijan pays Rs. 2000 to the girl's father, a sum he can never hope to save, and takes his bride home — and girls are married at 14 or 15 — he will probably have taken a loan from the local village headman or landlord, of a higher caste, at a rate of interest of about 31 per cent. To pay off the debt he and his bride work on the landlord's land. But because of the exorbitant interest, and because he has no other income, the Harijan sinks deeper into debt. In this vicious circle he is compelled to borrow more, in order to subsist. This form of bonded labour persists in many backward areas in spite of legislation which, in theory, has abolished bonded labour.

When the Harijan husband is at the end of his rope, the moneylender suggests that he can send his wife down to the plains to earn money as a prostitute to pay off the debt. (And incidentally to allow him to borrow more money). The man sees no way out, the girl has no say in the matter, and is taken by her husband and the moneylender to the village fair or to some crowded market where the local "agent" examines her. If he 'approves of the goods' all four take the bus to Delhi where the girl is sold to a brothel for about Rs. 3000. The husband may receive Rs. 2000 to pay off the original debt, but probably not the interest, so he remains bonded, and the agent and moneylender share the rest.

Patwaris and Prostitution

Another practise is for Rajput farmers, of higher caste, to contract several "marriages" with girls from different Harijan families, paying a relatively low bride price. They keep the girls at home for some days — the law decreeing monogamy has little meaning in such communities remote from the capital — then take them to Delhi and sell them for a good profit. In other instances prostitutes from Purola already in the trade are sent home by their brothel keepers to personally "demonstrate" their leisurely pleasant life in order to persuade young gullible girls to accompany them back to the city for a "brief" period, and then sell them to the brothels.

If a man wants to fight this practise and keep his wife, he is often threatened by the moneylender and even by the local revenue official, the *patwari*, who, in such districts, acts like a dictator and may well be involved in the trade. One prostitute told Gupta that the *patwari* himself used to come to the brothel to collect the Purola girls' earnings.

One girl told Gupta how her first husband, deeply indebted to the local landlord, sold her to a brothel in Delhi, how she came back and married another Harijan, how, on his death three years later, with no means of survival, she had to return to the brothel. Eventually she was taken out by a higher caste man, and finally bought from him by a Punjabi Khatri, a man from another community, with whom she was happily settled, though very poor. But many women stay on permanently,

some because they are physically forced to stay on by the brothel madams; others because they become addicted to the life.

Share — Cropping of Wives

In the adjoining Jaunsar-Bawar area, also in Uttar Pradesh, but bordering on the mountain state of Himachal Pradesh, the same situation exists with the Koltas, a community, also low caste, of agricultural labourers who have only recently been allotted small land holdings. Initially monogamist, the Koltas appear to have taken to polyandry in order to maintain the family on the income from prostitution. While one wife is kept at home, the others are "rented out" to the brothel keeper on a system of "share cropping" called "Batai". Like the Purola girls, many Kolta women who have experienced brothel life find it difficult to readjust to the very hard life of women working as agricultural labourers in this terrain. So they prefer to remain prostitutes. (In these areas women are expected to do most of the work including carrying fuel and water from long distances.) This society does not consider the children of such women illegitimate so the child's future does not act as a deterrent to the mother as it may in other cases.

Jayoti Gupta reported that Lakhmandal Village in Jaunsar-Bawar, the area covered by her report, has 44 households, out of which 19 are Koltas. Except for two families, who are better off, at least one woman from each family had been involved in prostitution, and all of the men between the ages of 40 to 60 worked as bonded labour. In the case of one girl from this area who was taken at the age of 15 to a brothel because her husband owed Rs. 1000, her years of servitude in prostitution totalled twenty-five. From the age of 15 to 40 she had never revisited her home. Her husband kept on borrowing more money to establish himself, married two other women to look after his household without her knowledge, and kept her in a brothel, collecting her earnings. The survey calculated that she had paid off about Rs. 75,000/-. Yet when she got too old for the trade and returned home, she had no money, and was forced to live with her brother as a humiliated, penniless dependant because she had nowhere else to go.

Only One Remedy

An old Lohar woman interviewed near Purola, told the Gupta team that there was only one remedy for the cruel exploitation of these helpless women. She said bluntly "Buy freedom for our men, give them land, only land. It is this land, these green fields which will contain our girls. Nothing else can!"

While poverty alone is the motivating factor for prostitution only in exceptional cases, it certainly is the common factor in the vast majority of situations. If the landless Harijans in Purola were not crippled by debt, the system of "sharecropping" their wives would stop. •

The Koltas: Bonded for Ever

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chayat instead of helping him usually finds some pretext to fine him for trying to 'back out' of the loan and of maligning his 'saviour', landlord-moneylender. The debtor, the poor Kolta, in these circumstances, has no choice but to pledge his services as a bonded labourer.

Bondedness For Generations

He is not even in a position to pay the interest leave alone the principal. Therefore, his bondedness may, as it often does, continue for generations. He has to suffer great privations and work for his master from dawn to dusk under conditions of semi-starvation.

The consequences of their chronic indebtedness and resulting state of bondedness are:

- Loss of personal freedom and the utilization of their labour almost free of cost;
- Change in occupation and loss of earning;
- Land alienation and its acquisition by the creditor;
- Conversion of their wives, sisters and daughters into prostitutes, sold and resold in near and distant cities for ending the debt bondage; and
- Chronic venereal diseases.

Bondedness, which begins as an economic transaction forced by the cultural and ecological conditions, leads to servitude,

A Kolta family tied with the chains of exploitation



not only for the original borrower but for future generations of the family.

Remedial Measures: Some of the states have recently enacted laws providing severe punishment for such anti-social and inhuman practices. These include long-range preventive measures to stop accumulation of old debts. A central law with the following important provisions was also promulgated:—

- All bonded labourers are freed;
- Substantial punishment is provided for contravention of the law;
- Civil courts have no jurisdiction to pronounce upon or issue injunction in any matter connected with this law.
- Vigilance committees at district and sub-divisional levels are to be set up to advise the implementing authority.

But enactment of laws is no solution. Bureaucratic apathy and lack of political will on the part of the government can never translate decisions and laws into action. The absence of vigorous and meaningful schemes of rehabilitation, and their honest implementation, has converted these laws into damp squibs. Many of those who were bonded are still bonded and probably will remain so until some radical steps are taken for improving their lot. •

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On Tagore's Boyhood Days

Srimati Lal

E bhara badara maha bhadara sunya mandira mor: Brimmed with rain is this month of Bhadra, Empty the temple of my soul

— Vidyapati



Such were the lines that welled up from the past and filled the imagination of a young Bengali poet long ago one day on the banks of the Ganga, swelling with rain. Calcutta has changed much, since then: it now lives through the antithesis of the Bengal Renaissance. Romanticism is, to many a Bengali poet-politician today, a dirty word. Can one imagine Shakti Chattopadhyay indulging in such quaint Vidyapatian sentiments? In an age when it is deemed proper to hide one's heart away beneath the tinselled armour of self-conscious cynicism, a renewed reading of Tagore's memories of childhood,

My Boyhood Days, proves a poignant experience. For there are no poets like Rabindranath any more.

Those were different days. Taking a walk along Chitpore Road down to the picturesque Eden Gardens, one may well have accosted the vision of Jyotirindranath, or 'Jyoti-dada' as he affectionately called, Rabindranth's remarkably handsome elder brother, riding on a chestnut mare along with his new bride, Kadambini — a lot of courage that must have needed, in those days of *purdah* followed by the young poet, on a pony. All-night *jalshas*, or musical soirees, would reverberate in the chandeliered halls of the Tagore home at Jorasanko, in north Calcutta. Children of the house were forbidden entry to the night-long *jatras* or theatre performances: Tagore the child would gaze down, with dazzled eyes, from his vantage-point of a third-storey verandah with its delicately-trelisded railings, at the entries of Jyoti-dada's elegant guests,

each one sprinkled with the spray of rose-water and presented a blooming rose.

The house at Jorasanko — fount of the child-poet's creativity — was abundant with shadows and whisperings of a fascinating past, a magic web of endless corridors, latticed windows concealing card-playing women, Tagore's elder brothers expounding on metaphysics, music and the new journalism, and shimmering, desert-like expanses of terrace where the child would imagine himself a bedouin in search of new lands, ensconced in his dream-caravans, engulfed by never-ending skies. It was Jyoti-dada, the poet's favourite brother, who, at some crucial moment brought a piano into his third-storey rooms. With it began the stream of song that was to become a religion in itself to future gener-

ations of Bengalis. Those who have seen the films of Satyajit Ray will know a little about this world.

Old Traditions Held Good

All this may sound too bourgeois to be true, but one forgets what Tagore repeatedly emphasises in this little memoir: that these were no longer the days of Prince Dwarkanath, the poet's great-grandfather, Bengal's first merchant-trader, who was on par with the *sahibs*. The family was now economically decadent if not spiritually so.

"... You must understand that we lived like poor people, and were consequently saved the trouble of keeping a good stable. Away in a corner outside, in a thatched shed under a tamarind tree, was a shabby carriage and an old horse. We wore the very simplest and plainest clothes..." Explaining his erratic and unsuccessful forays into academic learning later, Tagore explains: "Our family had no wealth then, but it had a repu-

tation, so the old traditions held good, and they were indifferent to conventional academic success. "Tagore the child was reared on cultural ebullience, a vitality of the soul: not on material luxuries, as it is sometimes mistakenly assumed. Formal education, with its status-symbol materialistic aspects, were of minor importance.

Punjabi and Rajasthani Ancestry

It is said that the *Thakurbari's* ancestry originally sprang from Punjab and Rajasthan. They were *piralis*, a caste of 'fallen' brahmins, who, having come into close contact with Muslim culture, had 'soiled' their caste by going so far as to share their meals with Muslims. The *Thakurbari* children were so fair-skinned that word went around that this was so because they were bathed in foreign wines at their moment of birth! They never wore dresses in the western style (as did elite children of those days), but tight Rajput pajamas and embroidered kurtas, as was the custom in the Tagore family. Tagore was surrounded by strikingly beautiful children and scintillating adults. But he was a lonesome child, always viewing life from a suitable distance: painfully shy, the darkest of the family. Neglected and insignificant among radiant elders, this was the child whose early poetry was mocked by his *Bou-thakrun* Kadambini, the elder sister-in-law whom he was secretly infatuated with. "You will never be able to write like *Bihari Chakravarti*" (long-forgotten, esoteric Bengali poet), she had once said-hurting him to the core.

Youthful Languid Flirtations

A hackney carriage on a Calcutta street today is a conversation piece among Marutis, and the domestic *jalsha* and *jatra* have long been replaced by much-publicised cultural extravaganzas sponsored by larger than life cigarette companies. The horse-riding of Jyoti-dada down public thoroughfares was, no doubt, a flamboyant act of social stylistics in the oscar Wildean tradition, but it was an act closer, in fact, to the art of intrinsic Indian *nawabi* tradi-

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Kadambini, Tagore's elder sister-in-law with whom he was secretly in love.



On Tagore's Boyhood Days

Continued from page 6, col. 5

tions than are the quixotic equine aspirations of today's Bengali brown-sahab at the races.

Social arts change — do people? Describing his delicate youthful flirtations with Kadambini, and her reciprocal attentions, in those languid, gentle terrace-rooms of the poet's boyhood afternoons, a trace of cynicism enters his poetic vision:

"... Modern women will smile at the *naivete* of their predecessors who knew how to entertain only their own brothers-in-law ... People today are much more grown-up in every way than they were then. Then we were all children alike, both young and old."

No, Kaviguru, You were Wrong

If the poet were before me today, I would tell him: No, Kaviguru, you were wrong. People have not changed: every family still has its young son Rabi, its new bride Kadambini. But the borrowed plumes of westernised education at St. Paul's School and Loreto Convent rest too awkwardly and heavily upon them. Corporate lifestyles cramp their Indian

movements, as would a borrowed suit several times too large. Today's Rabi and Kadambini must put up pretences of urbane adulthood much too early. They are sad children, in

an artificial society where the emergence of the most natural truths of the heart seems like an unimaginable miracle. Feel their tragedy, Kaviguru: do not reprimand them.

My Boyhood Days covers the period from Tagore's earliest childhood memories to the late 1880's when he left for England:

presumably to do "a regular course of study" but where, as the poet says, "a desultory start was made ... it came to nothing." Throughout his life, it had been real people, and the reality of nature, that had made him a poet: the same held good in England. "It was not prescribed class study ... my understanding

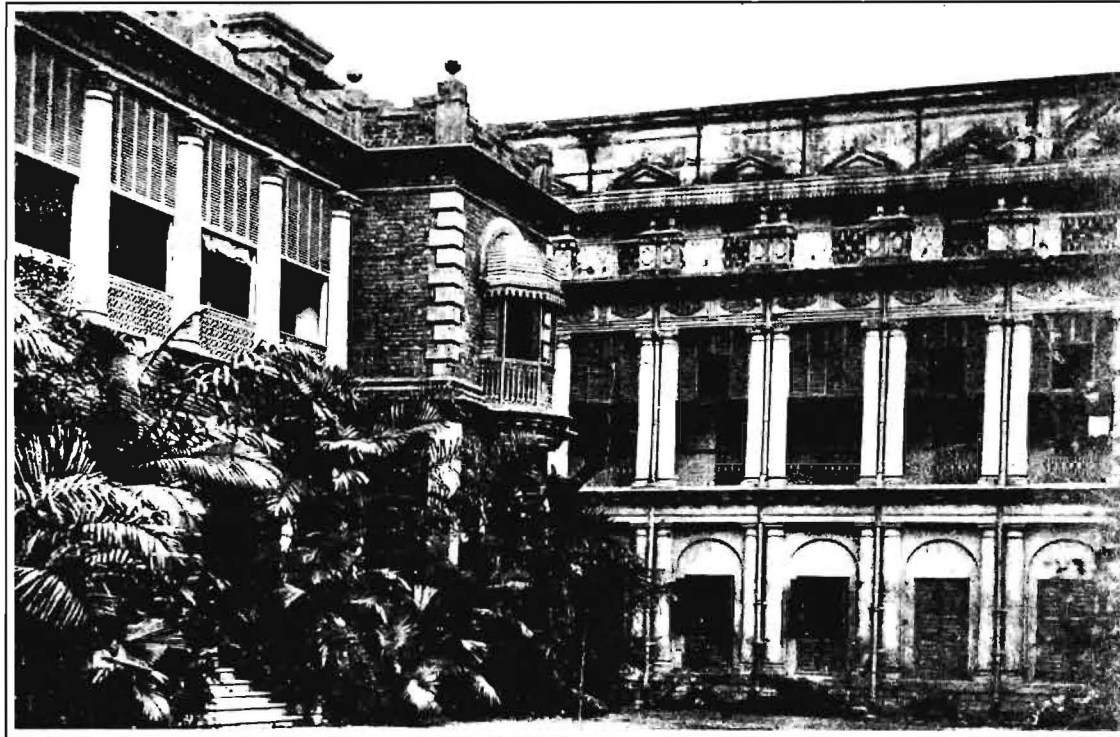
of human nature developed."

Genius is genetic. being born during the Bengal Renaissance and into the enlightened home of the Jorasanko Tagores, certainly helps. Reading Tagore's lucid, painless account of the multidimensional, deeply Indian, authentically Bengali chiaroscuro of his childhood, where the worst tragedy was mere boredom, I cannot suppress pangs of jealousy. Where were the shimmering all-night jalshas, when I was a child? Where the genteel sprinkling of rose-water on guests?

Could Ramakrishna, Vidya Sagar, Raja Rammohan Roy, Derozio and Michael Madhusudan Dutt have ever really existed, in this same Calcutta of my youth — the same dusty College Street, wounded with its bloodred slogans on the walls, the bitter fumes of buses within which one cannot breathe, and, of course, the smug little Marutis 'cruising like insects along Park Street from where all the poor, misguided little Loreto-educated lasses emerge, to bite on their chocolate cakes?

Your memories are soothing and exquisite, *Gurudev*, and make me proud to be a Calcuttan. But what has become of your city, oh poet? Where has all the poetry gone? Where the childhood?

Jorasanko, the Tagore home in Calcutta



Sanskrit and Cricket in a Karnataka Village

S. Sriman

In the midst of sylvan surroundings, about ten kilometres from Shimoga in Karnataka State is situated the unique village of Mathoor. In this little hamlet everyone speaks to everyone else only in Sanskrit. It is Sanskrit which is the mother language of English.

unison with us. A document purporting to have gifted this village and the neighbouring places to learned pundits by one Rama Raya, of the Krishna Deva Raya dynasty, is in the Shimoga Archaeological Department", said Sathyanarayana Sastry, in one breath.

least two to three hours teaching Sanskrit to the unlettered in neighbouring areas, making it a point to camp at these places for not less than ten days.

"What is Your Aim"

"What is your aim in making others speak Sanskrit", we asked.

Sastri says that there are a number of common words among Sanskrit and English. *Nasa* for Nose; *Na* for No; *Gnana* for knowledge; *Nava* for nine; *Agni* for Ignite and so on. There are a thousand such common words, according to him.

For the pursuit of Sanskrit, there is government help and patronage, says Sastri. We are also encouraged by the Hindu Seva Paratistna from Bangalore. Children's magazines are reproduced in Sanskrit to enable children to learn Sanskrit.

Prowess At Cricket

About other Mathoor inhabitants, Sastri spoke of Mathoor Krishnamurthy, who has been a registrar of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in London for the last eight years. He has won gold medals by translating several Tamil classics into Kannada. Another Mathoor man, of whom we are proud is Mathoor Lakshmi Kesava Sastri. The eighty-years-old scholar is well versed in singing "Gamaga", which is a kind of musical rendering of the classics. Apart from all this, our village is noted for its prowess at cricket.

Since it was a Sunday, one had practical experience of the love of cricket here. Dressed in typical Brahmanical manner,

dhoti tied in pancha-kacha way, bare bodied and with a tuft of hair flowing, a man was bowling at a demonic pace.

We also found several TV antennas on the rooftops of several houses in this unique village. A small hamlet, but they are clinging fast to an ancient culture despite enjoying modern facilities. Modernity lives cheek by jowl here with tradition. Inside the houses, several objects have Sanskrit names inscribed in Kannada.

The elders in this village want Mathoor to be kept as a focal point for the spread of Sanskrit, Yoga, Gamaga, Music and the Shastras. Will their dream be realised?

One saving grace about this village is that politics has not made an intrusion, unlike other villages. There is not a single party flag or poster. There is no cinema house, in the guise of providing 'enlightenment' to the rural folk.

When they are in need of any recreation or entertainment, they enact Sanskrit plays. For their living, they cultivate supari, sugar cane and other crops. Some others take up government jobs.

In this salubrious village on the banks of the Tunga river, where peace and calm reigns, we failed in our attempt to take a photograph of Sathyanarayan Sastri, who helped us a great deal in knowing the facts about this village with a difference. His answer was a polite "NO".



the villagers assert.

I met Sathyanarayana Sastry who serves as a Sanskrit Reader in the Sir M. Visveswaraiyah institute in Bhadravathi. Although he has toured Japan extensively, he is a simple person.

"Our Mathoor and the adjacent Hosahalli — these two villages figure jointly in any discussion — have together some 80 houses with about 400 inhabitants. We call ourselves "Sangeethi" and some 500 years back our ancestors came from the border districts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The rest of the villagers, though from different provinces and serving as coolies, have acquired enough knowledge of Sanskrit to be able to converse with us and live in

He proceeded to say "Around the Fourth century, Sanskrit enjoyed high patronage. But it fell from favour steadily; so we are now trying to save it from total extinction. Our aim is that everyone should learn to speak in Sanskrit, if not write in it. Hence it is that we teach spoken Sanskrit from the kindergarten classes, we are not against the use of the mother tongue. We only want Sanskrit as an additional language", he said.

In this village, almost everyone is a literate. There is a graduate in every household. Many graduates spend their lifetime in the pursuit of teaching Sanskrit. A group of some twenty to thirty people, take upon themselves to spend at

"For the national good, cultural unity is necessary. Only Sanskrit can create that unity. Sanskrit is in the blood of every Indian. All Indian languages owe a lot to Sanskrit. Any language can attain sanctity through association with Sanskrit. Moreover, knowledge of Sanskrit enriches knowledge of the mother tongue. We, therefore, plead to give Sanskrit the same status as the mother tongue", we were told.

In support of the theory that English is the off-spring of Sanskrit, they say here that English, French, German and Sanskrit are sister languages. That all European languages have some link or the other with Sanskrit is an irrefutable fact. But this can be established only by researchers", says Sastri.

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The Security and Sedition Trap

There comes a time in the history of a nation when it becomes essential for the voice of reason and humanity to reach out to the people. In 'Viewpoint' this fortnight one such voice is raised in anguish and hope.

We are living through discordant times. The capacity of the political system and social ethos to act as bulwarks against misuse of power and general disorder appears to be at a discount. The crisis rages on with political aggrandisement, economic decline and 'religious' militancy the order of the day across the country, including the nerve centre, Delhi.

Frustration, combined with a dormant moral conscience lend themselves to an air of desperation. The disease has spread down the line to all walks of life, within all groups and communities, creating the very conditions which contribute to political and bureaucratic authoritarianism.

The past fortnight has been witness to at least two examples of a political lack of trust and official high-handedness: The ham-handed manner in which the Government managed the adopting of a resolution concerning Article 249 in the Rajya Sabha (See page 10) and the arbitrary and illegal arrest of the editor of the Bangalore-based limited circulation monthly 'Dalit Voice'.

By invoking Article 249 in the name of security vis-a-vis the situation on the western international border, the Centre did not help in creating the right atmosphere, particularly in Punjab, where one of the critical political issues is one of greater autonomy for the State. Not only was Punjab not consulted, even the Rajya Sabha was not provided the relevant information according to which the Centre felt constrained to create a security belt along the border where its writ would replace that of the State Government. In the circumstances, concerned citizens and opposition parties could hardly be blamed for suspecting the motives behind the resolution.

The illegal and arbitrary arrest in Bangalore of the editor of 'Dalit Voice' by the Chandigarh police (See page 9), is a clear vindication of reasons to suspect that the authorities cannot be trusted with the ever-increasing draconian powers they have amassed on the pretext of countering terrorism.

It can be argued that 'Dalit Voice' is not written in an entirely unobjectionable style. But vituperative language and anger against oppression do not amount to sedition or terrorism for which the editor was held. While there would be many who would be unable to empathise with the Dalit Voice editor's choice of words to castigate the establishment, there is no denying that his journal represents the *iron in the soul of India's dalits*.

To arrest an editor of a little known journal on charges of sedition and terrorism for daring to expose the aberrations and scars of our social and political system, is to give the lie to the liberal and secular pretensions of the State.

There are many editors who have been guilty of genuinely serious charges. However such worthies of the fourth estate are employed by media conglomerates, they clothe their vitriolic writing in esoteric language, and are at the most hauled up before the Press Commission.

The discrimination against dalits, and against those taking up their cause, becomes only too obvious when an editor of a journal articulating their point of view is made out to be a dangerous criminal whereas the editors of 'Times this and Times that' glow in the sun of chauvanist communalism.

New Delhi has only recently been subjected to the joke of a former minister storming the central district telephone exchange with armed security guards, misbehaving with the women staff and eventually succeeding in sending a major part of the telecommunication network out of gear. Citizens of the capital were then treated to the spectacle of army regulars in battle greens taking up position around the affected building. Such goings on cannot but raise doubts in the public mind that the military is being increasingly diverted from its legitimate duties.

The incidents at the phone exchange building could have reasonably been treated as a practical joke in another day and age. But in the present climate they are only a manifestation of the security and sedition trap the nation is stuck in.

We are steadily preparing ourselves for a fascist system to take command either in the name of national security or religious pride. Whatever the motivation for the 'take-over', it amounts to the fearsome prospect of India turning into a land sans liberty.

There is also hardly any consolation to be had from the thought that we could end up by allowing the creation of a very Indian recipe of liberalism and autocracy and then patent and trade it as Parliamentary Fascism.

If and when such a prospect turns into reality, all Indians of all shades and beliefs will be damned in the name of a State which would derive its legitimacy not from the power, security and sense of belonging of the people, but from the power games of a militarised political faction.

There are indications that precisely such an exercise is being currently undertaken on the pretext of ensuring security and curtailing sedition.

A Cry for Humanity and Sanity

The Way Out of the Punjab Imbroglio

Bhagwant Singh Dalawari

I would like to get out of the mad puzzle that the Punjab problem has now become, but I do not know the way out. And I dare say, no one knows. At the moment my heart is bleeding with the memories of the visits I have made to a large number of families, both Hindu and Sikh, in which cold-blooded murders have taken place labelled as 'killed by extremists' and attached to each of them is a tag of Rs. 20,000 proclaiming the maximum price. 'Taxes extra' is not mentioned, but the anguish of the heart stresses that the degeneration in terms of human callousness and barbarity is total. Did I say total? No, rare shining examples of sanity remind me that sanity can have an edge over insanity, if we look for a 'way in' instead of looking for the way out.

I hang my head in shame over what I see and hear. Even when I have succeeded in sifting grain from the chaff, I have, as a human being and as a Sikh, much to be bereaved about. A young Hindu widow with her young unprovided for children haunts me just as the agony of a Sikh widow. I would like to atone for the madness that has enveloped the land of my Gurus who lived and died for all, who sacrificed themselves for the freedom of faith of all and who showed us the way to live as HUMAN BEINGS. Alas, today, even pain has a label, saying 'this is a Hindu pain, Sikhs need not bother'. Looking, robbery, killing, all are now categorised as 'Hindu' or 'Sikh'. If a Hindu is in trouble, a Sikh may be indifferent, if he does not gloat about it. Similarly, a Sikh in trouble need not produce poignancy in a Hindu's heart. Has our secularity been now brought to this level in 40 years of independence? We have removed 'Hindu water' or 'Muslim water' from railway stations, but we have developed Man's inhumanity to Man with animal instincts into an art of the sophisticated! The more one is educated, the more one is communal. THIS IS THE STATE OF PUNJAB TODAY.

Human beings or Hindus and Sikhs

I do not wish to talk of the problem from the political angle — nor even from the historical point of view. I wish to take up the question that presents itself in the form of a warning: Shall we again become HUMAN BEINGS or remain HINDUS AND SIKHS for ever? In my humble opinion, an answer to this lies not in the past, but in the future. To my utter dismay, a Hindu wishing to guide me in the search for an answer, brings up all his past bitter knowledge about the Sikh leaders' machinations for separatism and their urge for superiority without even casually mentioning that his Sikh brother has suffered terribly in the recent past. Indeed, the Hindu genuinely believes that for all his problems of insecurity and uncertainty, Sikhs are responsible. A young angry Hindu declares, "Sikhs



are all extremist".

The Sikh tells me of the Blue-star Operation, the Nov. 84 carnage, but does not refer to the unbearable burden of terrorist killings and future uncertainty that has fallen on his Hindu brother. Indeed he talks of Hindu communalism. I am, therefore, unable to take any help from a Punjabi Hindu or a Punjabi Sikh, whether we can and would become human beings again.

Visible Facts

I turn to the visible facts, verifiable facts and confront my brothers — Hindus or Sikhs — with them to emphasise that their fight is a common fight against extremism, terrorism, joined by criminals, smugglers, mafia-men, etc. I talk about indiscriminate killings by terrorists without regard for the religion of the victim. Cruel killing of youngmen, both Hindus and Sikhs, by extremists, who MAY call themselves Sikhs, but can never be considered as Sikhs according to the Gurus' definition. Sikhs do not join me in categorically condemning the killing of innocent people, even if the victims are also Sikhs. Hindus do not join me in making a common front in facing the extremists. So, today, even SECURITY is "Hindu Security". For Sikhs, the hurt for previous wrongs does not let them disown Sikh wrongdoers. Again I draw a blank, even if the situation would be presented on the basis of facts.

The tragedy is — and it would be comic to watch such a situation only if the consequences were not drenched in blood and tears — that in addition to the terrorists' extremism, we have to day THE EXTREMISM OF THE POLITICIANS AND THE EGO OF THE LEADERS. Sometimes there is a heart-warming response from some mild-mannered members of both communities, but their voices are silenced by the vociferous, agitating and unreconciling madmen wishing to fish in troubled waters. Even their family relationship with each other does not prevent them from taking extreme attitudes.

Rumour Churning Machine

Every rumour is today believed as a fact. But this too is on a sectarian basis. If a Sikh hears of atrocities in a police station on Sikh extremists, he readily believes them, whereas a

Hindu scoffs at them. On the other hand, if a Hindu is told of Sikhs' zulum in some areas, he readily believes them. Thus a rumour-churning machine is always in motion making it impossible for the situation to improve. And that is exactly the source of strength for those who want the pot to boil making it possible for them to show their indispensability. Off the stage, these "extremist" leaders too would agree to a liberal humanitarian approach, but in the company of their followers, they would polish their extremist language even further.

IS THERE A WAY OUT? Yes, certainly. But we will have to go in — go within ourselves, to analyse our conduct, to see our own dark deeds which have contributed to this imbroglio. As a human being, have I been contributing to extremism by humbling myself before an extremist, by subjecting myself to forcible participation in crime? Have I contributed money on a threatening call by an extremist? Have I purchased security by not reporting about a killer? Have I been, at heart, a communalist, by not caring for the agony of my brother or sister without discrimination? Have I not contented myself in expressing unhappiness and horror at today's situation? Have I not pandered also to the parochial sense of 'Hindu' or 'Sikh' alignment, even if I pose to be a liberal? Have I joined in protest or in pain at ANY INJUSTICE done to anyone? If the answers to these questions in my own heart are not satisfactory, no amount of writing or advising others is going to be of any avail. In simple words, the way out would come from deep inner anguish of the conscience which yearns to live one's life according to the dictates of our Masters, Rama, Krishna, Mohammed, Christ, Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh. Guru had said: "REHAT PIARI MUJE KO SIKH PIARA NAHEN (I love the Sikh's conduct, not the Sikh)". Guru Nanak had said in Mecca: "Shubh Amlan bajon dono roi (Without good deeds, both Hindus and Muslims will go on bewailing).

There can be no question of any innocent person being killed by anyone who calls himself a Sikh or a Hindu. Let me, therefore, enumerate a few suggestions which may lead to a way out, although I am not sure how much response they would get.

- The humanity in Hindus and Sikhs should be summoned by recourse to the scriptures as they are in terms of one's own faith, untainted by political or parochial or sectarian approaches. — MEN OF INTEGRITY in both communities should undertake this exercise in devotion to their Masters.
- A consistent, sustained initiative in projecting the views of the silent majority of all Punjabis, both Hindu and Sikh, should project their views

Continued on page 9, Col 1

Cry For Sanity

Continued from page 8, col 5

and force them on the slender minority determined to disrupt relations between the people.

- For too long have we been pointing fingers at others; let us now dig out our own shortcomings, sort them out and put our shoulder to the wheel of joint human progress. Love, understanding, fearlessness are the answer to hatred, bigotry and terror. By succumbing or kowtowing to terror or blackmail on account of our mutual bickerings we have unwittingly become supporters of terrorists.
- The time for drawing-room statements is past; we must come out in the field in large numbers, fearlessly walk, hand-in-hand, with the terrorised, display our solidarity and silence sten-guns, if necessary, by willing sacrifice of our BODIES; Kabir says in Guru Granth Sahib: **AB KAISE MAROUM, MARAN MAN MANIA, MAR MAR JATE JIN RAM NA JANYA (How shall I die, my mind has decided to die willingly, because, in reality, those who do not understand God go on dying again and again).**
- Even for wrong and bad pursuits, extremists & terrorists are willing to die; we are not prepared to die even for our sacred principles; HOW CAN WE THEN PREVAIL OVER THEM? Fearless pursuit of brotherhood and humanitarian solidarity would become a solid wall against terrorist onslaught, if we eschew hatred, fear and mistrust.

Arya Samajis, politicians, keshadharis, amritdharis, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, will live only if humanity survives. Do we want to live constantly in fear and blood-letting in medieval times? If not, let us all rise above our narrow political, social or personal interests and, instead of discussing only in homes, clubs or magazines, unitedly go into the field. Remember what Guru Nanak says: **SACHON URE SABKO UPPAR SACH ACHAR. (Truth is above everything, BUT TRUTHFUL CONDUCT IS ABOVE TRUTH ITSELF).** Let politicians attend to political questions; citizens must not be swept off their base of spiritual steadfastness of humanity.

Dalit Voice Editor Arrested, Handcuffed

**Charged with Sedition and Terrorism
Home Minister Expresses Regret**

The Statesman story datelined Wednesday, August 27 carried an account of low "this year's Independence Day was an unpleasant day for a Bangalore journalist. On the day the nation was rejoicing, Mr. V.T. Rajashekar, editor of Dalit Voice of Bangalore, travelling handcuffed from his home town in a second class compartment arrived in Delhi.

After being moved from one police post to another, he found himself at the Paharganj police station where he was "treated like a criminal". He was taken in the evening to Chandigarh where he spent nearly two weeks in "illegal" detention.

For three hours after reaching Delhi, he was denied water and food. His wife who had forced herself to "accompany" him to Delhi was insulted at the police station. A sub-inspector of the Chandigarh Police who brought him from Bangalore was rude to Mr Rajashekar and even told him that he would get neither food nor water.

His first glass of water on August 15, after arriving in Delhi a little after noon, was at about 4 p.m. — and he feels that was possible only because of intervention by an MP. But his shackles were removed only when he reached Chandigarh.

He was told that he was being charged under Sections 124A, 153A and 4 of the Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985 because an article he had written in Delhi Voice was reproduced in a Chandigarh journal, Dignity, on March 2.

Mr Rajashekar says the article gave the Dalits (oppressed people) view of the Punjab problem which he saw as a class struggle between the poor Sikhs, who include the extremists, and the rich Sikhs represented by the Akali Dal leaders, including Mr S.S. Barnala and Mr P.S. Badal. He added that he had criticized the demand for Khalistan.

Dalit Voice is six years old but Mr Rajashekar has been a journalist for 29 years during which he has written 25 books on the downtrodden. He is the recipient of the national award from the Bharatiya Dalit Sahitya Academy for 1986 for his contributions to the cause of the Dalits.

We reproduce below an appeal dated August 18, 1986 to the Governor of Punjab and Administrator of Chandigarh, Shri S.S. Ray from Mrs. V.T. Rajashekar.

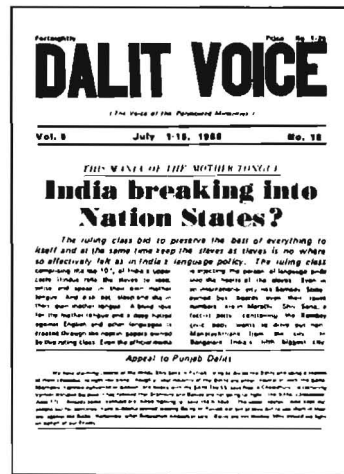
Mr. V.T. Rajashekar was released in Chandigarh on Tuesday August 26. The Home Minister has reportedly expressed his regret and apologies to the Bangalore editor.

Sir,
V.T. Rajashekar (54), my husband, is a well-known and senior journalist and writer, having served national newspapers like Indian Express, Free Press Journal, Patriot, Deccan Herald, etc. for the past 29 years. He is also the author of about 25 books on different issues connected with the downtrodden. He is the recipient of the National Award presented by the Bharatiya Dalit Sahitya Academy for the year 1986 for his outstanding contribution to the cause of the Dalits. He is closely associated with several human rights and civil rights organisations. For the last six years, he is the Editor of 'Dalit Voice', the only English fortnightly of its kind dealing with the problems of the oppressed.

On Aug. 12, 1986, the Chandigarh police came to Bangalore and wrongfully arrested him without giving any reasons and not even showing him the arrest warrant. We were denied even the basic right to produce him before a Magistrate in the presence of our lawyer, and to appeal for bail. (On the basis of a newspaper report in March, 1986, anticipatory bail was obtained from the Karnataka High Court under Section 124A, 153A and 295A of the IPC). No details were given to us by the police about where and when he would be taken. On the other hand, every effort was made to misguide us about his next destination, and he was handcuffed and taken from one police station to another as if he were a professional criminal.

On Aug. 13, he was clandestinely whisked away to Chandigarh via Delhi. It was only because I and my family members decided to pursue him till the end, against all odds, that we were able to keep trace of his movements.

On Aug. 15, he was brought to Police Station East, Chandigarh, and only on Aug. 16 our lawyer was told that he was arrested because of an alleged reproduction of an article published earlier in 'Dalit Voice', Bangalore, in a Chandigarh jour-



nal called 'Dignity' of March 2, 1986. Our lawyer was told that he is being charged under Sections 124A, 153A and Sn. 4 of the Terrorists & Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985.

While our lawyer waited outside on the whole of Aug. 16 for my husband to be presented before the Duty Magistrate, only at about 6 p.m., strangely enough, the very same Executive Magistrate who had issued the arrest warrant came to the police station itself and remanded my husband to police custody upto Aug. 21. It is learnt that the other accused on different charges housed in the same police station were produced before the Duty Magistrate at about 3 p.m. on that day.

I write this appeal from the police station in Chandigarh where my husband is being detained, a strange place thousands of miles away from my house, helpless and uncertain of the future.

I appeal to you to help us as:
(1) My husband cannot be held responsible for the alleged reproduction of an article pub-

A Memorial Needed for Banda

The article "Banda: the unwept and unsung Sikh hero" by Satindra Singh which has appeared in your issue of 15 August 1986 is a revealing one.

Banda, in the past, may have been somehow excommunicated from the Sikh fold. But his heroic deeds have now an added importance as the genocide of Sikhs which was perpetrated in November 1984 has some resemblance to the brutal killing of Banda and his followers in the year 1716 A.D.. This is so even though it is difficult to believe that in these modern and civilised times, the medievalism of 268 years ago could have re-occurred.

I have seen the site of Banda's execution near the tomb of Khawaja Qutab-ud-Din Bakhtiar Kaki near Qutab Minar, Mehrauli, New Delhi, but it is only a gurdwara in name. It will be appropriate therefore to convert it into a proper memorial of the brave Banda Bairagi!

— Mahindar Singh
New Delhi

lished in Dalit Voice at Bangalore when he was not even aware of any such act, let alone giving his consent.

(2) 'Dalit Voice' is published in a far-off place like Bangalore and cannot be deemed to have any repercussions in Chandigarh.

(3) 'Dalit Voice' is being published for the last six years without facing any charges. If the article had not been allegedly reproduced in Chandigarh, my husband would not have been charged of any offence.

(4) My husband has always been against the divisive forces in the country. Instead, he has always upheld the need for the integrity and unity of the country.

(5) 'Dalit Voice' only reiterates the thoughts of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution of India.

(6) This baseless allegation against an eminent journalist like my husband is a gross infringement of Article 19 (1) (A) of the Constitution of India which guarantees freedom of speech and expression.

(7) My husband, who has a weak health, may not be able to withstand the rigours of this unjust ordeal.

The continuous physical and mental torture undergone by us since Aug. 12 is leading us to a breaking point. And I am afraid that we may not be able to carry on any further till such time as justice reaches us. I therefore request your Excellency to kindly intervene and immediately order the withdrawal of the charges against this eminent journalist.

— Mrs. V.T. Rajashekar
Camp: Police Station East
Sector 26, Chandigarh.

Harji Malik's memoir on Sant Longowal in the last issue of the Gazette was courtesy the Economic and Political Weekly. Raj Thapar's article "How Do you Do It — was courtesy Lokayan Bulletin.

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NEWSHOUND



By Rap

**Article 249
Is Pernicious Says:**



Chitta Basu, of the Forward Block, a constituent of the Left Front Government of West Bengal, who informally

coordinated the opposition to the Resolution introduced under Article 249 in the Rajya Sabha. A senior parliamentarian, he has represented the Barasat constituency, virtually unbroken since 1966. He lost his seat in the 1984 General Election, and is now a member of the Rajya Sabha (The Council of States).

According to Shri Basu, the Government first considered amending the Constitution in order to assume powers reserved for the States. But it was pointed out to the Prime Minister that the Government had enough powers to tackle the Punjab situation, including the infiltration of trained terrorists from across the Pakistan border.

At a meeting with members of the opposition, the question of invoking Article 249 instead of amending the Constitution came up, with the P.M. giving an assurance that a position paper would be supplied to the members. The paper, it was pointed out, would help in the process of examining the need to invoke 249. But, Mr. Basu told the Gazette "At no stage was such a paper supplied." The Forward Bloc member from West Bengal added, "Article 249 should not have been invoked because it is pernicious". "It is pernicious," he explained, "because the opposition was not taken into confidence. The proposal was not even divulged officially to the Government of Punjab."

While holding the position that invoking Article 249 would erode the autonomy of the States, which he and his party opposed, Mr. Chitta Basu said "Punjab does need special treatment. Special powers may be necessary, but only if existing powers prove to be insufficient." But Mr. Basu was not in the least convinced that all the existing powers with the government had been exhausted."

Government Overplaying Pakistani Card Says:



Jaswant Singh who led the debate in the Rajya Sabha on 249 for the BJP. A liberal in the BJP ranks, he was moved to

the core by the destruction caused to the Golden Temple by Operation Bluestar.

On July 3, 1984, he wrote in the Indian Express:—

Darbar Sahib — Golden Temple, is a place entirely unique in the Sikh psyche. It is a part of the struggle of a section of the Indian people to evolve into a dynamic and assertive identity of their own. It is not only a place of worship, it symbolises Sikh History and is also the seat of temporal authority. More than all that, it is a living symbol of struggle against all kinds of oppression. It is part of the very central core of the being of Sikhs. It is not just an edifice or a collection of

Article 249

Baljit Malik Interviews

**Chitta Basu (FB);
Jaswant Singh (BJP);
George Fernandes (J)**

In the fragile political situation obtaining in the country, particularly in Punjab, the official response is characterised by panic stations. The emphasis is on law and order, deployment of more paramilitary forces, the Pakistani hand behind the terrorists, the need to seal the border, tactics to centralise and concentrate political power and the creation of a countrywide hysteria that the 'nation is in danger'.

What is missing is statemanship, a search for solutions for the basic causes of unrest and a political initiative which would instil confidence in the generally low morale of government and people across the country.

The government's latest move in the recently concluded monsoon session of Parliament to invoke Article 249 of the Constitution in order to assume powers reserved for the States aroused widespread resistance and resentment.

buildings. Every stone there is the brick-work of history itself. That the rest of us Indians are unable to view it in that light and see it only as having become a seat of the terrorist both saddens and frightens me. Why blame the Sikh alone, as an Indian I should have been equally revolted by its earlier defilement; by political machinations of the most objectionable kind; of self-interest predominating over the interest of our people as a whole. That we still do not do so is our collective failure, not that of the Sikhs alone. that even now when we talk of what has to be done we flounder with absurdities like 'healing touch'. Is it only the Sikhs that need to be 'healed'? Surely there must be something gravely wrong with the Hindu if they do not feel shocked and bewildered with what has taken place in the Golden Temple. I do very strongly feel that this is one occasion which perhaps best exemplifies the phrase, 'physician heal thyself. Let us stop and reflect for a moment about this whole business of the 'healing touch'. How can those very hands that are bloodied now undertake such a task? Then again is this 'healing touch' in itself not suggestive of a kind of condescension? And that in the context of the Golden Temple and about a people as proud and self-reliant as the Sikhs?

When I met Shri Jaswant Singh in his Sunder Nagar office, strains of western classical music filled the room as I shook hands with him across a table full of antique memorabilia.

My first question was: Was it good timing for the Government to invoke Article 249 at this juncture?

The Rajya Sabha member from Rajasthan felt there was a critical frustrating reality about the

administrative timing for the decision to invoke Article 249. As only the Government had the relevant information, Shri Jaswant Singh said "I have to go along with the government's bonafides, when it says this is what is needed." At the same time he clarified that politically he didn't think it was timely. "The government's approach all along on Punjab has been to find palliatives. It has always tried to find ad-hoc answers to a substantial issue; it is to come up with the ordinary response in an extraordinary situation."

My next question to the honourable member was: Do you feel the Punjab problem would be behind us if the Indo-Pakistan border were to be totally sealed? Is it mainly a cross-border problem as is being emphasised both in official and unofficial quarters?

Shri Jaswant Singh said he would be very surprised if "as a somewhat unhappy neighbour, Pakistan did not take an interest in our discomfiture ... in Punjab, in Assam or anywhere else." But he added, "my problems and my country's problems are my problems. If I am so incapable as to be not able to handle or contain them internally, then of course this interest gets encouraged and assumes a cross-border dimension."

The Central Government, Mr Jaswant Singh felt, had played the Pakistan card for two very simple reasons. He explained "As it is the totally inhuman and unacceptable killings in Punjab are abhorrent enough. How do you put the odium of criminality on the heads of those who are doing this. You do it by painting them with the brush of a hostile neighbour. Along with killings you link them with 'deshdroha' — enemies of the country."

"What the government does

not realise is that by so doing a whole category of Indians get painted with a similar brush." "And that is something unacceptable to me," insisted Shri Jaswant Singh.

While going along with the Government in voting for the Resolution in the Rajya Sabha, Shri Jaswant Singh also castigated the Government for its inept handling of the situation in Punjab. Excerpts from his speech:

It is a measure of the times and their extraordinariness that this House is today seized of a matter which it has never, in its history of 36 years, ever debated. It has never felt the over-riding urgency of national interests to invoke Article 249. It did not feel the necessity in 1962, when large parts of Assam were overrun and when the rule of the Government of Assam no longer ran over those parts. It did not feel the necessity to do so in 1965 when we faced a situation of an invasion from the west. Article 249 remained uninvoked in 1971. It remained uninvoked even in the fraudulent emergency that was imposed on this country in 1975.

It remained uninvoked in 1983 when a wholly fraudulent and a totally unacceptable election was imposed on the State of Assam resulting in near total breakdown of law and order there. If, therefore Sir, today the Government comes forward and for the first time in the history of Parliament, article 249 is invoked, then I am led to one conclusion: that in the very invoking is implicit an admission by this Government, of the grossest failure on its part to perform two primary functions; which are to protect the life, liberty and the freedom of its citizenry and, to protect the frontiers of the State. I do not have to condemn this Government. Events are condemning it. I do not have to speak ill of this Government. The very invocation of article 249 speaks ill of this performance of this Government.

**Delhi's Boy —
Scout Government
At It Again — Says:**



George Fernandes, a former parliamentarian and outspoken critic of the regime in New Delhi.

"Delhi's boy scout government is again at it. First, the Prime Minister calls a meeting of opposition leaders to inform them of the grave situation in the Punjab sector of the India-Pakistan border, and to convey to them his decision to amend the Constitution to acquire powers to protect the border.

The opposition leaders tell the Prime Minister and his Law

Minister that the Constitution provides for such contingencies and there is no need to amend the Constitution. And everyone is aghast at the ignorance and stupidity of the government.

And so, now, we have the Rajya Sabha resolution under Article 249 empowering Parliament to legislate with respect to any matter enumerated in the State List. Though the Union government has not yet come forward with the draft bill, it has made known that it proposes to acquire powers under the Rajya Sabha resolution to legislate on five subjects in the State List:

In effect what the Union government is seeking to do is to once and for all undermine the powers of the State governments, reducing a State government to the status of a collector of local taxes.

Obviously, there is more to this exercise than meets the eye. The Punjab situation is being used as a cover to pursue a pernicious plan to destroy what ever is left of the powers of the State.

There has been a great deal of sabre-rattling for the creation of a no-man's-land along the entire length of our border with Pakistan. Though no clear proposal has yet been presented, it appears that the idea is to have a 5 km. (some opposition politicians have talked of a 1 km.) wide stretch of our territory throughout the 2500 km. long border to be reduced to rubble to enable the Army and other security forces to prevent infiltration by smugglers, terrorists and other anti-Indian elements. There cannot be a more ridiculous proposal than this hare-brained idea.

To ask the people living in the border areas to move away from their land is not only to deny them their means of livelihood. It is also tantamount to questioning their patriotism. People in the border areas must be given support to acquire greater stakes in their land, so that they become the first line of defence against any probable enemy.

Bumbling along from one blunder to another, the boy scouts of Delhi have also been pursuing their own sinister designs to perpetuate themselves in power.

After all, if the power they enjoy today is the direct fruit of the original sin of creating the Punjab imbroglio, they seem to have concluded that pursuing the same strategy of alienating one community from another will enable them to hold on to that power.

What Punjab and the country need is a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. But it is beyond the capability of a Prime Minister who justified Operation Bluestar and the Delhi pogrom of the Sikhs to generate such a spirit in the country."

SHOP AT



10 Regal Building, New Delhi-110001, INDIA

Sikhs and the Rebellion*

Satindra Singh

When the Great Rebellion broke out on May 11, 1857, the rebels expected active support from the Sikhs. Their expectations were not without some basis. It was no more than eight years when the Sikh Kingdom had been annexed by the British. Could not the enemy's enemy be their friend? On the Sikhs depended their success and the end of the British rule in India. Even Thornhill concedes that 'if the Punjab rose, our position would be but desperate ... we might not be able to hold out till assistance arrived from England'. But Punjab remained 'on the whole loyal'. Indeed, from this province, the British were able to raise 39,000 men of all creeds, communities and dialects. It appears, the Punjabis, whom the British regarded as their equal, had really been won over heart and soul, irrespective of fortunes in the battlefield in the late forties of the last century.

There were reasons for Punjab's antipathy to the rebellion. The Sikh sardars were afraid of the restoration of the Moghul hegemony as it would have meant their own certain suppression. Moreover, Sir Henry Lawrence, unlike the Moghul satraps, had dealt gently with them, respected their fallen fortunes, and laid a lighter hand upon their tenure contrary to what the British themselves had done in any other province. 'The magnificent success of Sir John Lawrence's Government during the rebellion', writes G.W. Forrest, 'must be in a large degree attributed to the measures carried out by Sir Henry Lawrence for upholding the *jagirdars* in their ancient rights.' Those among the sardars who were suspected had been deported, and those who were allowed to remain, remembering the tyranny of the Khalsa army, shuddered at the prospect of the success of a revolt which would probably place them at the mercy of another equally tyrannical army. The dispossessed Sikh feudal barons, leaders of the Sikh wars, had not forgotten the defeat at the hands of the *Poorbians* sepoy. These *Poorbians* or easterners had, of course, been led by British *Poorbians* without British discipline. Let us also not forget that it was these *Poorbians* who formed the bulk of the armed rebels. The sardars hoped they would be able to avenge their humiliation by siding with the British against them. The *Poorbians* sepoy had stigmatized the sardars 'as men of low caste'.

The Sikhs shunned the idea of joining the rebels also because it seemed inevitable to them that the success of the rebellion would bring in its wake religious persecution at the hands of the Muslims. The martyrdom of their ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, in Chandni Chowk, Delhi, and the two *Ghallugharas* (holocausts) were still fresh in their memory. John Lawrence, estimating their feelings correctly had spread the



tale that the Moghul king of Delhi would reward any one who killed a Sikh and brought his head for proof.

All Punjabis Helped the British

It would not be accurate to say that only the Sikhs from among the Punjabis had stood by the British. The Punjabis, as a whole, had helped them during the rebellion. The villagers belonging to all the three communities — Sikh, Hindu and Muslim — had assisted the British authorities in defeating and capturing rebels at various places. The land revenue was paid regularly and almost to the last pie. Holmes records that incomes from 'the excise taxes positively increased and there was but little falling off in the attendance of the government schools.' Indeed, writes the Reverend Cave Browne, 'in some districts of the Punjab, the payments (of land revenue and other taxes) were made before they were actually due; a fact which carried with it the cheering conviction that with the mass of the population ... the continuance of our *Raj* was really desired ... (They) had no wish to change masters, especially with the prospect of the interregnum of anarchy ...'

Punjabi and N.W.F. Muslims

The Muslims of Punjab, too, were afraid to side with the rebels. The British had saved them from the oppression of the Sikhs. In other parts of India, the British might have caused the ruin and suppression of the Muslims as a whole, in Punjab they were their saviours.

Frederick Cooper says 'that certain great causes have doubtless operated in keeping the Swatis, Peshawaris and Kabulis well affected. The assessment of the valley is of a lightness to them formerly unknown. The Durrani ground the people to dust. They continue to do about the same at Kabul to this day. The Sikhs levied annually (rupees) twelve lakhs from the valley and as much more in plunder. The British government contents itself, and makes the people content, by taking (rupees) six lakhs, and spending as much monthly ... The large expenditure, and the vast number of troops, have opened out a market for cereal produce as well as for wood and the fruits of the hills. So much so that the greatest punishment to a fractious tribe is to shut them out from Peshwar and the cantonment markets.' Kaye cynically observes: 'Much as those wild

Muslims loved Mohammed, they loved money more ... Every man who had a matchlock or a *talwar* or, better still, a horse to bring to the muster, came forward with his tender of service to the British officers at Peshawar.

Benefits of Strong Government

The explanation of what might even now appear the enigmatic behaviour of the Punjabis, especially the Sikhs, is not, after all, so complicated. The conquest of Punjab had been so recent that the Punjabis had not had time to forget the evils from which that conquest had set them free, and to experience the evils which had followed in the wake of British rule in other provinces. Under the new regime, the burden of the taxes and levies which had increased enormously in the anarchy that followed Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death had been lightened. Dacoity had almost been stamped out. A summary and equitable settlement of land revenue had increased the prosperity of the *riot* and made him contented. The new rulers had assessed the land rather low 'leaving a fair and liberal margin to the occupiers of the soil'. Maybe, because of its proximity to the frontier, the British had not meddled with the land tenure system in Punjab. The construction of new roads, canals and bridges and the preservation of forests and grazing tracts had been undertaken vigorously. In short, the Punjabis had come to know of the benefits of a strong government after years of unrest and anarchy.

The Punjab had been blessed, too, with a succession of golden harvests, such as had not been known for years. 'The country was too happy and prosperous', writes Frederick Cooper in *The Crisis in the Punjab*, 'to join in any *emeute*, out of pure friendship', and run the risk of an uncertain future.

In addition, according to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, there were other 'cogent causes.' In the first place, 'the poverty, which was rife in India, had not yet had time to affect the Punjab.' Secondly, there was a powerful European army on the spot. Thirdly, wisdom was shown by the officials in at once disarming the sepoy. Fourthly, the whole of Punjab had been disarmed after annexation. Fifthly, Punjabis and Pathans had already entered service and there was no unemployed population to be tempted to untoward adventures. Finally, the desire for plundering Hindustan (that is, Delhi, Lucknow, Agra, etc.) had possessed them. 'Thus, the submission, if not acquiescence, of the more dangerous class, was secure,' writes Sir John William Kaye.

In the early days of the rebellion, however, Punjabi support to the British was 'passive'. They enlisted but not in great numbers. They held back until Delhi had fallen, and then recruits came in thousands,' writes Sir Charles Aitchison in his *Life of Lord Lawrence*.

A Limited Rebellion

Thus, it was not the Sikhs alone who sided with the British during the Mutiny. The uprising, in fact, was limited to the region between Bihar in the east to Delhi in the west and the foothills of the Himalayas in the north to central India and parts of Rajasthan in the south. None of the ruling princes, however, joined the revolt. Lord Canning had solemnly guaranteed their right of adoption in perpetuity. Of the *rajahs* and *ranis*, only the dowager queen of Oudh, Hazrat Mahal, fought to the bitter end. Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi laid down her life in the fight against the British in March 1858. Hers was, however, a slightly different case. She took the extreme step only after she had failed to convince the British that she did not have anything to do with the uprising and massacre in Jhansi, her home town. Bahadur Shah Zafar fought under duress. Nana Sahib took the field against the British only as a 'prisoner in the hands of the soldiery.' The zamindars, both of the British and pre-British days, the merchants and money-lenders, the educated classes and the native officials — all sided with the British or at best observed sullen neutrality.

Moreover, the Sikh support to the British was 'progressive in the present-day parlance if the estimate of Karl Marx was correct. The British 're-conquest' of the country saved India from sliding into a moribund social, feudal and political structure. Marx succinctly described the development thus: England 'though actuated only by the vilest interest' was 'the unconscious tool of history' in bringing about 'the greatest, and to speak the truth, the only social revolution, in Asia.'

The British gave India (i) 'political unity ... more consolidated and extending further than ever ... under the Great Moghals', (ii) created the 'native army', (iii) allowed the establishment of the free press; (iv) introduced the institution of 'private property in land', (v) built up an educated Indian class 'endowed with requirements for government and imbued with European science', and (vi) organised regular and rapid communication within the sub-continent and with Europe.

Because of his inborn hatred and contempt for 'bourgeois institutions', Marx did not, however, mention two other 'benefits' which accrued to India because of the British rule. These were: introduction of the rule of law and parliamentary institutions and procedures. Unfortunately, these have not been allowed to take firm roots in the country by its rulers during the past 27 years of independence. In fact, everything possible has been done, sometimes openly, to destroy them in the name of 'economic growth with social justice'.

* From the author's forthcoming book, *THE SIKHS: CRISIS OF IDENTITY*, Ajanta Publications, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi - 110 007; PP. 200. Price Rs. 150; £ 10; \$15.

Limits to the 'PM to CM to DM' Approach

Lessons from the Ecology Movement in the Doon Valley

Vandana Shiva

No other region in the country has received more attention of the Government for environmental protection than the privileged Doon Valley. The printed and the electronic media has left no stone unturned in the projection of the environment movement in the valley. Yet the question remains; is the Doon Valley really saved? How much can the common people gain from the experiences of the Doon Valley where almost everyone seems to be claiming direct hot line connection with the PM's Secretariat? No other region has got a special and star-studded Board for its development planning constituted by the Union Department of Environment. For the Doon Valley is the cradle of the Doon School, the nursery of India's privileged elite.

Yet the two major ecological disturbances in the Valley, ecologically and socially hazardous limestone quarrying and limestone based manufacturing, seem to be out of control. This is in spite of the declared deep concern of the Prime Minister for a pollution free environment in the Valley.

Contradicting all technical norms and scientific analysis, a decade ago, limestone based and hazardous industries at the foot of the Mussoorie Hills were approved by an interministerial committee of the UP Government. The industrialisation of Doon Valley was approved since it had the much needed "backward area" stamp, though the tehsil tops the UP list in educa-



Erosion in the Mussoorie hills: the former queen of the hills now a pauper at the hands of the Mining Mafia

tion and per capita income. In a national seminar organised in June 1985 all the environmental action groups demanded immediate closure of the hazardous industries which were causing serious pollution. A case under the Public Nuisances Act (Sec 133) was filed by the citizens at the lower court which was duly rejected on the plea that air pollution cases should not come remote corners of the Valley, of a peaceful and non-violent against reckless quarrying. The Supreme Court, by necessity had to depend on inputs from committees to decide which could be allowed to operate on grounds that they did not have serious destructive impact on

local human settlements, water and forests. These committees the closure of quarries close to main roads and human settlements as well as important tourist like Sahasradhara. Tiny hamlets in the interior nooks and corners located spots, the recommended resources the mines its sity, tinues. satyagraha rumbings as public nuisance cases but under the Air and Water Pollution Control Act. In July 1986, there were reports in the press about a letter from the PM to the CM about the closure of the polluting industries. The CM in turn asked the DM to take steps and the SDM, under Sec 142 ordered the closure of the industries.



A victim of a village which was destroyed by quarrying

Field Report

Limestone Mining Ruining Environment

It is widely believed that the damage done by limestone mining in Dehradun has stopped. But Dhum Singh Negi, an activist of the Chipko Movement who recently travelled to the more remote parts of this district discovered otherwise.

As activists of the Chipko movement Garhwal region, we frequently get reports of ecological ruin from remote villages to which we respond, whenever possible and as a first step visit these villages and collect first hand information on the situation there. One such village is Nahin Kala in Dehradun district.

However, our first encounter as we approached this village after two days' trekking was of an entirely different nature. It wasn't reckless limestone mining; instead it was criminal poisoning of a beautiful hill river.

We became aware of this reality in Sera village, located on the bank of the Saung river. The villagers here told us of a group of armed men who arrive once or twice every week, and spray nearly 30 to 40 kgs of a chemical in the river. As a result, a lot of fish and other aquatic life over a stretch of nearly 2 kms of

this river is poisoned at periodic intervals.

They carry away several sacks filled with fish and anyone objecting to this is threatened with violence.

Sera is the last village of Tehri Garhwal district. Beyond this, after crossing the Saung river, starts Dehradun district. It is on

this other side of the Saung, that a mine run by a contractor, Sardari Lal, is still functioning. According to local people he has purchased land from the farmers of Loduwa Kot and on this land mining is being carried out. but we could see from a distance, that the mining work has been extended into the forest area. The Pradhan of Sera accepted that several problems have been caused by mining, but still wanted it to continue — because the contractor provided free transport to villagers upto Dehradun.

How Green

It Used To Be

A few more hours of trekking brought us to another mine, known locally as Chatragun Gujral's Nahin Kala (Bakkot) mine near Sisyanu Khale. This mine is spread over an area of about 4 to 5 kms. A serpentine 3 metre wide road has been constructed right up to the top of the hill. Only a few stumps of felled trees could be seen on this barren land, but the rich vegetation in the area we had just covered gave us an indication of how green this area must have been once.

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Loading Limestone: Clandestine operations

The story would have been fantastic if the PM to CM to DM channel was effective in ensuring pollution control. But the industries are possibly as smart in the game and they quickly moved the high court and got the order stayed under Sec 142.

In fact the concerned SDM seems to be under fire from the High Court. The people are now wondering if a pollution free environment cannot be guaranteed even with the direct intervention of the PM in this 'backward' valley blessed with a lot of 'forward' residents, what will happen to other vast regions where people claiming direct access to the PM do not reside? If the PM to CM to DM approach is fumbling even in the regions with which the PM has close contact, it is positively unworkable for the citizens of this country who live invisibly in other regions, with no direct access to Delhi.

The new Environment (Protection) Act of 1986 does not promise to remedy the limited and vulnerable PM to CM to DM strategy used in the Doon Valley. All power and authority for environmental protection has been vested in the hands of the Central Government. This excessive centralisation will make local control and participation more, not less, difficult, thus undermining the full potential of the new act itself. Without decentralised monitoring and local participation, protection of the environment becomes an empty rhetoric instead of a social reality, specially for the vast majority of the common and poor people. Centralised control is able to respond only to those with access to the power centre. It must per force, leave out the marginalised majority.

Environmental Activism

In its trendsetting order of March 12, 1985 the Supreme Court had closed most of the limestone quarries in the Doon Valley. Yet, in the far and remote corners of the Valley, rumbings of a peaceful and non-violent satyagraha against reckless quarrying continues. Tiny hamlets located in the interior nooks and corners of the hills, and inhabited by the politically weak, still continue to be under a constant threat of loss of life and property, as is the case in the Malmot region.

The local environmental action organised by the Chipko activists of the region is a struggle for equality, democracy and justice to ensure their material survival. It is a pointer to the fact that environmental protection, cannot be ensured merely through an enlightened union government but needs a genuine decentralised and democratic decision-making about the utilisation of natural resources at the local level. The Chipko struggle against limestone quarrying in Doon Valley is not merely a struggle for the protection of the environment but for the protection of the rights of the people to protect their environment.



Wheat and Rice or Wheat and ...

The Johl Committee Report on Diversification of Punjab Agriculture An Exercise in Unreality

S.S. Dosanj



The Expert Committee on Diversification of Agriculture in the Punjab, the Johl Committee, has submitted its report to the Punjab Government. The Committee was set up to investigate the problem faced by Punjab farmers in marketing of their wheat and paddy produce particularly in view of the impending market gluts. In the Committee's words "... during 1985 paddy marketing season the serious developed in the clearance for paddy, and the issue of diversification received the pointed attention of the State Government." **The Committee was to examine the possibilities of diversification in the State's agricultural production, particularly by shifting a sizeable area presently under paddy and wheat to some other crops.** The experts claim that they have considered the "practicability of the recommendations" for execution by the government as well as "attractiveness of the alternatives" from the point of view of profitability to the farmer, and that then suggestions are technologically feasible and economically viable.

Caught In A Dilemma

However, a careful scrutiny of the Report suggests that the Committee is caught in a dilemma. It cannot shut its eyes to existing realities, yet it has to make recommendations to diversify on at least a 20 per cent area of current wheat-paddy acreage. The experts know that such a shift will hurt the farmers' interests because as the Committee acknowledges that "no crop enterprise at the existing level of production technology and product prices competes with wheat the crop in rabi and the paddy in kharif." (7.12.6)

In recommendation No. 7.12.2 the Committee cautions "policy makers at the national level also must realize the economic squeeze which has come upon the farmers of Punjab by decreasing profit-margin in real terms over the last one and half decade." The committee states that to discourage foodgrains production in areas of high potential like Punjab, Haryana and Western U.P. in any way would be a short sighted policy. When profit margins must not be allowed to fall any further, the market clearance for wheat and paddy in Punjab has to be adequately assured and streamlined through prompt purchases in the market.

Of utmost importance is the Committee's refutation of the



Dr. S.S. Johl

Government's contention that the country is now surplus in foodgrains and therefore there is a need to diversify from wheat and paddy to avoid the problem of plenty. Recommendation No. 7.12.1 states "It has to be understood and realized that there are no real surpluses of foodgrains in the country in terms of the needs of society. It is only a situation of excess supplies over effective demand. The recommendation goes on to say that a large majority of the poorer sections of society

administrators, concerned public agencies as well as the farmers of the state. But as far as the farmers are concerned the recommendations are irrelevant unless the State and Central Governments implement their part. Can and will the Central and State governments deliver the goods?

The Committee states that until and unless agricultural scientists evolve new high yielding varieties of the crops recommended to replace wheat and paddy in the proposed 20 per cent area, the desired results cannot be achieved, because as accepted, rabi wheat and kharif paddy enjoy a distinct edge over any other competing crop. The Committee categorically states that at the present level of production technology, that is the input-output relationship, and the prevailing prices of commodities "there is limited scope of shifting areas from

At the present levels, according to the Committee, sugarcane competes well with paddy-wheat rotation and indeed has a slight edge. (3.24) But the Johl Committee recommends that the State requires at least 50 more sugar mills if an increase of sugar cane acreage by 2 lac hectares is to be profitable. Desi cotton can replace the paddy crop marginally in the districts of Punjab given adequate plant protection measures to avoid crop failure, and an assured export market.

Minor Crops and Horticulture

The Committee feels it is feasible to divert some wheat-paddy area to minor crops such as mentha, isbagol, celery, coriander, fennel, etc., but only if adequate processing facilities are made available. Horticultural crops — fruits, vegetables, flowers are another possibility for profitable diversification but with serious qualifications. The Committee emphasises that fruit



A Punjab Market flooded with wheat arrivals.

lacks sufficient purchasing power, hence the seeming surplus. Any attempt at diversification and diversion of effort from wheat and paddy production should "take cognizance of the national needs reflected in terms of per capita availability of foodgrains which is quite low at present." (7.5.)

Irrelevance of Report

These two recommendations reduce the whole report to irrelevance as the alternatives suggested by the Committee provide neither immediate solutions to the marketing problems of 'surplus' foodgrains nor help the farmer to accept the recommendations for diversification in the immediate future, because none of the alternatives assure a better margin of profit than that occurring from rice and wheat. A farmer's decision to produce a particular crop is essentially based on its relative profitability, which depends on the price level, the yield and the market facilities for clearing the crop. This is an accepted fact on which the popularity of the present wheat and rice crop rotation is based.

Suggested Alternatives

All the alternatives suggested by the Report carry the proviso that the market price of the substitution crops must be both made remunerative and stable. But how is the State to ensure remunerative prices to farmers under the present State structure? The Committee has made its recommendations for the consideration of policy maker,

under paddy and wheat crops." (3.2)

Rape Seed, Mustard and Pulses

If some area under wheat is to be replaced by rape and mustard, either the price or the yield level must be raised by 39 per cent. If winter maize is to be substituted for some areas of wheat the existing levels must be raised by at least 16 per cent. Rice area can also be diversified to basmati rice if the yield or price levels of basmati are improved by 13 per cent. In kharif pulses, arhar has potential if the rise in levels is at least 40 per cent. If some area is to be put under soyabean and sunflower, the Committee observes that "unless processing plants for extraction of oil and manufacture of soya products are set up with adequate capacity, these crops will fail on account of lack of market." (3.22).

crops are perennial in nature, entail heavy initial investment, hence the authorities concerned will have to ensure that fruit growers keep earning reasonable profits on their investment, on a continuous basis. For bringing 6 per cent of the cropped area in Punjab under fruits and vegetables by the year 2000 A.D., the Committee recommends the establishment of an adequate number of fruit processing plants, crop insurance schemes and low cost credits to farmers.

Recommendations For Livestock

Recommendations concerning development of livestock enterprises, which will increase the area under fodders through diversification, require many prerequisites. The cost of production of milk has to be reduced, primarily through improvement

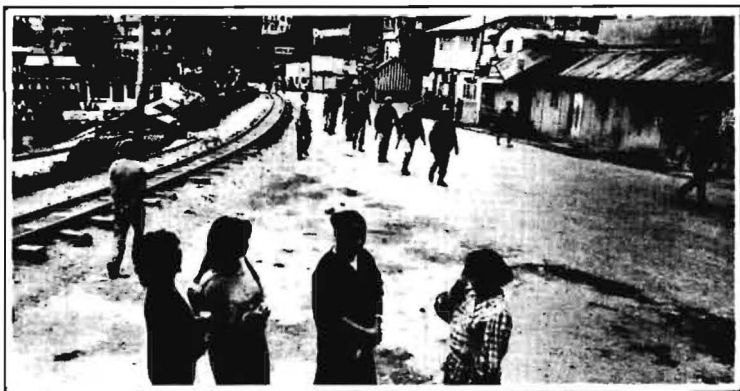
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Combine harvesters at work for wheat harvesting.



Warning Signals in Gorkhaland

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Independence Day 1986 in Darjeeling

Darjeeling district, the core of the Gorkhaland demand, lies in the "chicken's neck" of West Bengal, an area of extreme strategic importance sharing international borders with Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Hill areas make up three quarters of the district. Out of the 12 lakhs population seven are Nepali speaking. As is true of many hill areas in the country, these hills have suffered from chronic neglect. Development has been concentrated in the south and the backward, northern part of the state has a strong feeling of alienation.

In 1907 hill leaders demanded a separate administration for Darjeeling district, a demand repeated ten years later to the Montagu-Chemsford team, and again, in 1929, to the Simon Commission. But in 1934 the Hillmen's Association of Darjeel-

ing asked for the district to be "totally excluded from Bengal". Antipathy to Bengali domination resurfaced in 1943 when the newly formed All India Gorkha League demanded inclusion in Assam of Darjeeling district and the Doorsa region of Jalpaiguri. After independence this demand changed, to wanting a separate province comprising the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri and the states of Cooch Behar and Sikkim.

Legitimate Grievances

In the 1950s the Gorkha League submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Nehru asking that either Darjeeling should be directly administered by the Centre, or a separate state should be set up as mentioned earlier, or that Darjeeling and the Dooars should be included in Assam. The League listed grievances against the West Ben-

gal government, including the failure to recognise Nepali as a major language. There appears to have been no response to the memorandum.

These were and are real grievances. The tea gardens, constituting the mainstay of the region's economy, were owned and managed by Britishers, and later also by Bengalis. Marwaris dominated the trade. Bengalis ran the bureaucracy, with Nepalis only in lower echelons. The situation has not changed. The North Bengal University initially to be located in the hills, ultimately ended up in Siliguri, which is in the plains and Bengali dominated.

With Siliguri increasingly the trading centre for Darjeeling, Nepali contractors must go there for contracts. Hill areas offer few job opportunities even today, plans for light industry remain on paper, 99.5 per cent of the tea garden labour is Nepali, but few, if any Nepalis, are in management. Yet the literacy rate is rising, and because of the international borders, smuggling is a major activity resulting in strong western influences, particularly on young people — cosmetics and jeans characterise the local youth culture — and expectations have risen. The younger generation is ripe for emotional exploitation.

The Gorkhaland Movement — the beginnings.

Enter into this scenario the astute and ambitious Subhas Gheising. His earlier political activities and his literary efforts

— many of his 21 books were love stories, described as 'soft porn', which made him popular and a familiar name with the Nepali speaking population — were to prove a useful popular base. From 1968, when he launched the *Neelo Jhanda*, to 1978, Gheising called himself a Nepalese citizen. But in 1979 he declared he was Indian. The next year he formed the Gorkha National Liberation Front, a nomenclature usually connected with liberation movements from a foreign power, as some observers have noted.

For the next six years the GNLFF remained relatively inactive, and until 1983 Gheising contented himself with calls for boycotting elections, unsuccessfully. No one seems to have taken him seriously. Not even the Nepali speaking population.

In 1983 he wrote a letter to the King of Nepal (see box), sending copies to various governments, including the USA, USSR, Britain and India, and to the United Nations. In spite of the intemperate language and objectionable contents of the letter, the Indian government took no notice. In 1983 perhaps New Delhi was preoccupied with Punjab. But there is no explanation for the West Bengal government's failure to take note of Gheising's action.

Meanwhile after 1978, the Left Front government in Calcutta was more responsive to the grievances of the hill peoples. Nepali was declared the second official language of the state,

although, because of the Union government's opposition, it was not included in the 8th schedule. Funds were diverted to Darjeeling district for development and economic measures planned to provide employment. But this was not enough for Gheising.

Gheising's Emotional Appeal

After the 1984 election Gheising started touring the villages, to the remotest hamlet, rallying popular support at public meetings and meeting influential Nepalis.

He highlighted the victimisation of Nepalis by the West Bengal government, the failure to include Nepali in the 8th schedule. His was a purely emotional appeal, aimed to arouse passions and fears on issues of ethnic identity and language, some real, others imaginary. He orated against economic discrimination but offered no economic programme. The CPI(M) still did not take him seriously, while the Congress (I), particularly local party cadres, openly encouraged him, hoping to use the agitation against the state government. **The Marxists claim that Gheising is a four anna Cong(I) member!**

Gheising introduces Indo-Nepal treaty into movement

In March 1986 Meghalaya police pushed out of the state

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Wheat and Rice or Wheat and ...

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of milch animals. Therefore India should import about one lac Holstein-Freisien high yielding cows from the United States, Europe, or/and if possible, from Israel. An adequate number of trained veterinary doctors will have to be appointed to provide health cover for these cross-bred and pure-bred milch animals, which entails weekly examination of every animal and good sanitation. The state needs five times the present number of veterinary doctors to fill the requirement. Doctors and specialists will have to be trained in a separate university or deemed university in the shape of a Punjab State Veterinary Research Institute.

Fuel, Wood, Timber

Turning to the State's needs for fuel wood, timber, paper pulp etc., the Committee recommends the plantation of trees on a large scale, the target



Sugar-cane: will the farmers switch to it in preference to rice

being six per cent of the geographic area of the State under forestry. The experts observe that "Forest plantation requires high investment in the beginning and through long time maintenance extending over a period of 10 to 20 years. There are not many farmers who have the capacity to invest in forest plantation and wait for a decade at least for returns. The intending farmer would need to be assisted with long term credit for establishing block forests and planting of forest trees". The recommendation goes on to say that advanced credit from banks on long term rates of interest can easily be realized from the sale proceeds of trees. Trees can be hypothecated to the banks. Being a long term profitable enterprise, loan recovery should be no problem, but the decade long waiting period must be supported by the banks.

On reading the Report carefully one deduces that the Committee bases its recommendations on the premise that the Central and State governments are genuinely interested in the farmers' welfare; that they have the capacity and the will to ensure remunerative prices for agricultural products, but only perhaps lack definite information on statistics of remunerative prices for different crops. Hence the Committee has taken special pains to calculate the exact figures of market prices — acceptable to farmers that is — of the crops proposed as replace-

ment crops in the diversified acreage. The Committee's recommendations are all very valid and the experts appear to believe that the Government will concede all these prerequisites.

But this belief completely ignores the logic that a bourgeois democracy will not support such an agrarian structure, which would help the farmers' lobby. Had the State structure been sympathetic to farmers' problems, there would have been no need to appoint the Expert Committee. The Committee has made hypothetical recommendations for changing the character of the market in favour of the peasantry. These are idealistic recommendations ignoring the existing reality — the power potential of the middleman in our economic structure.

Market fluctuations are not chance events. They reflect the war between capitalists and the peasantry. To expect a merciful, benevolent attitude from the hostile class is only living in a fool's paradise. The Committee's recommendations are baffling because they provide no solution to the immediate problem of marketing wheat and rice produce. Instead they raise many new issues, which may provoke the State to appoint many more Committees to consider how to implement the Jöhl Committee's recommendations! The purpose for which the Jöhl Committee was appointed will not serve the purpose, if as is predictable, the Report will only gather dust. ●

Limestone Mining Ruining Environment

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Near a board marked Nahi Barkot Dynamite Store, found a few workers standing outside an office. Our conversation was disrupted by a big explosion. The workers explained that dynamite was being blasted. We protested that this should not have been done without warning to which they said that we must have missed the sound of the whistle. We also saw a sign board with "Work is closed"! When questioned about this, the workers said that it was meant for another mining site where work had actually closed. It seemed strange that a board meant for another site should be kept here.

Expired Lease

On the road to Nahi Kala village, we stopped for a while at the house of Kalam Singh, a 59 years old well-informed man. He said that Gujral's 20 year lease had expired in 1984, but the mine was restarted after remaining closed for a few months. He added that several drinking water sources such as Jurkhala, Koparpani, Dabar Kapani and Paanikhala have dried up as a result of the mining work. Destructive boulders come down the slopes where once much needed water flowed and some water mills had to be abandoned on account of the shortage of water in rivulets. Some water-mills collapsed under the debris brought by water from mining sites and the irrigation system had also been adversely affected.

Reaching Nahin Kala village

we could sense the overwhelming distress and helplessness felt by the people of this village. The contractor has extended his mining to the community land of this village and refused to pay any royalty. The forests on this land have been destroyed, and a 10 km long road was constructed whereby thousands of trees were felled, and the money shared between corrupt officials and the contractor. There was no auction or marking of trees as per rules. One mine worker related how a forest official had sold three truck loads of wood to a sawmill owner in Rani Pokhuri.

According to villagers, the mine had spread to nearly 550 acres instead of the approved area of 144 acres. The mine was temporarily closed for a month or so, but when it restarted a further stretch of 3 kms of road was constructed right up to the top of the hill, destroying a water source (Manda) and a forest (Kinkan vaani Patala).

Next morning we went to the mining site. Mining was being done on very steep slopes. It was also apparent that truck drivers carrying limestone on such steep slopes were exposed to grave hazard. We learnt of three deaths involving these trucks. Ironically all this has been happening in the Dehradun district, which is supposed to have received maximum attention in the government's effort to protect the environment. ●

N.F.S. INDIA

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about 7000 Nepali speaking people who had been working for years in coal mines there. Truckloads of them were just "dumped", bag and baggage, on the border with Assam, and then pushed out again to West Bengal by the Assam government, which in turn tried to repeat the same treatment. Assam and West Bengal thus acted against the terms of the Indo-Nepal Treaty which allows Nepalese citizens the privilege to travel and work anywhere in the country.

The mass of deportees were Nepalese migrant workers from Nepal, and were repatriated by the Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi. But about 1000 were Nepali speaking Indians from Assam, Sikkim and North Bengal. Here was a perfect opportunity for Gheising and he seized it, as the spark to ignite the explosive combination of fear, resentment and emotion.

Even earlier he had talked of Clause 7 of the 1950 Indo-Nepal treaty, and had deliberately interpreted — some say misinterpreted — the wording to suit his purpose — of sowing seeds of fear and insecurity. Clause 7 reads "The governments of India and Nepal agree to grant, on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other the same privileges in the matters of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privileges of a similar nature."

The Indian Nepalis, Nepali speaking residents of India for over a century, are indubitably Indian citizens. But playing on the insecurity resulting from the "anti-foreigner" slant of the Assam movement, Gheising was able to convince his agitated followers that Clause 7 deliber-

ately equates the Indian Nepalis with migrant Nepalese from Nepal who come and go. Reciprocal basis and nationals of one country in the territories of the other are the terms Gheising has misinterpreted for his purpose. He has told the fearful Gorkhas that they can be thrown out of India at any time, that Clause 7 makes them stateless people, reinforcing his argument that unless they have a state of their own, they will never be safe and secure. On April 13 he called for Gorkhaland as a separate state in the Union and launched a 11 point action programme, to culminate at some unspecified time, in a no tax campaign.

West Bengal Government's Repressive Policy

All that was required to stop the Gorkhaland movement in its tracks at this point in time was for the State and Central governments to clarify Clause 7 and declare that it had nothing to do with the Indian Nepalis, that Article 5 of the Constitution guaranteed their Indian citizenship. But both kept quiet on this point. In a knee-jerk reaction the state government, which in 1985 had introduced a bill seeking regional autonomy for Darjeeling, a bill defeated in Parliament, condemned the Gorkhaland agitation as separatist and anti-national, although, publicly at least, Gheising's demand was for a state within the Union. Instead of trying to meet the challenge politically, Calcutta chose to use strong arm methods.

A Mass Contact Programme

Gheising continued his mass contact programme, using taped

cassettes of his speeches, which were played over loudspeakers in meetings which he could not address personally. It has been reported that these speeches freely distort history and are purely emotive in content. In May he called a highly successful three day bandh in the district, which strengthened his leadership. The next incident to feed the agitation was in Mahanadi, a small place seven kilometres from Kurseong town.

There the police arrested Ram Prasad Majhi, a 60 year old primary school headmaster, greatly respected in the area as the local intellectual, to whose home people from all around came to discuss various matters. Majhi had been telling them about the Meghalaya evictions, urging them to stand up for their rights.

Next day agitated people came to his house having heard of his arrest. About 1000 them walked seven kilometres to Kurseong to find him. It appears that although Section 144 had been enforced, no one prevented the procession from entering the town, but once they had entered, the CRP tried to disperse them. Allegedly someone threw a stone, the CRP says the mob turned violent, an allegation denied by the GNLFF, and the CRP fired, killing five people and injuring many others. The cruel treatment of the old man and the police over reaction immediately alienated those Nepali speaking people, including Gorkhas who, previously, had not been GNLFF supporters. Gheising repeatedly pointed out "you are not safe with this government", the young flocked to his organisation and many took oaths in blood to fight for Gorkhaland.

Politics of Violence

The Gheising "legend" grew — this is essentially a one-man show at present — and he announced the next part of the action programme: burning of Clause 7 of the Indo-Nepal treaty on July 27 all over the district. There was still no mention of an economic programme. The GNLFF chief's language is not one of moderation. On July 13 he had told his followers that if Gorkhaland was not conceded by 1987 "we will throw out all state government officials, including the deputy commissioner and the SP from Darjeeling and run the administration ourselves."

Violence in Kalimpong

Press reports quoting the GNLFF leader suggest that his tactics are to provoke the state government into repressive action in order to inflame passions as much as possible. So far he has succeeded in doing just that. Since he has been constantly speaking the language of violence, it is difficult to believe Gheising's statement to the *Telegraph* on July 30 that the situation in Darjeeling district had gone beyond his control and that "the GNLFF will not take any responsibility for the people's actions" adding that his "boys armed with kukris and spears are likely to retaliate anywhere, anytime. They are not going to listen to me any longer." Gheising also stated

Letter to the king of Nepal

Excerpts from the letter written by Subhas Gheising as President of the Gorkha National Liberation Front to the King of Nepal dated 23 December 1983. Copies sent to the United States of America, the USSR, Great Britain, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India and other governments:

"Even thirty-six years after Bharat independence the settled ethnic races of the Gorkhas of more than six millions are living as degraded human beings in every parts of the country of Indian and parts of their own ceded land of Sugaulee Treaty by surrendering their national spirit, national identity, historical pride and their homeland and destiny; and further, they became the naked victims of foreign national issue, deportation issues and unnecessary police, torture, arrests, raids, killings and continuous undesirable inhuman acts of deliberate imposition of systematic domination

of other Indian races; and under such cruel pressures of racial segregated atmosphere and directly denial of justice on liberty, equality, fraternity and opportunity, the Gorkha National Liberation Front had to be formed to meet the above cruel challenges of a series of apartheid and genocide crimes done by the states and central government of India since Bharat independence

As such seriously keeping in view the above mentioned unpardonable historical crimes against humanity or still unresolved question of the very political existence or future status of the said Gorkhas in the Indian Union, the above three responsible signatories countries of Nepal, Bharat and British have been urged to abrogate the said existing Indo-Nepal and British-Nepal treaties of 1950 and further adopt new treaties for a permanent political settlement of the said victimised Gorkhas...."

that he had not called the 108 hour bandh as he did not want to hit the tourist trade any further, but that it was the popular response. The fact remains that Gheising has now called off the agitation for a month, for reasons not stated, and there is, presently, peace in the district. His angry followers have been restrained.

Dilemma for the State Government

The state government is in an unenviable position for which it is largely responsible. Belatedly it now recognises that the situation requires a political solution. But at the same time it condemns the demand for Gorkhaland as anti-national. It also now has a distinct serious law and order problem on its hands whenever Gheising calls the tune. Can it win back its influences in Darjeeling district? If the demand for regional autonomy is conceded now — and this does not lie in the state government's hands — such concessions even if they are now acceptable, will only strengthen Gheising and there are many who feel that personal ambition maybe the overwhelming imperative behind the Gorkha leader's demand for a separate state.

Complicating the situation further and perhaps preventing timely action, is the position of the Central government. New Delhi insists that the agitation is not anti-national, that this is only a law and order problem for the state government to handle. But what prevents the Centre from issuing a clarification on Clause 7 of the

Indo-Nepal treaty and pointing out the relevance of Article 5 of the Constitution, in order to settle the issue and set at rest the fears of the Indian Nepalis? By its failure to take this obvious action, the Centre has made itself suspect and open to the accusation that the ruling party is playing politics at the expense of the national interest. Party emissaries talking with Gheising as if he is another Laldenga or Phizo and giving the impression that the Centre is considering discussing the issue with him over the state government's head are a dangerous tactic. By now the ruling party and the government should have learned their lesson.

The danger is that if the Gorkhaland movement does get out of hand, if the young firebrands can no longer be controlled and take over, and there is increased violence, measures taken to repress it can set in motion the tragic "action-reaction" cycle which could lead to a Punjab situation with GNLFF radicals taking to extremists tactics. Could the Congress (I) considerations, projected through the Centre's stand on Clause 7, lead to the possibility of imposing President's Rule in West Bengal, in case the violence gets out of hand? The Marxists and their coalition partners have this fear in mind. One can only hope that the Prime Minister will be guided by the national imperative, not party ambitious. The state and Central governments must act jointly to solve the Gorkhaland question without delay.

Subhash Gheising

Subhash Chandra Tamang, better known as Subhas Gheising, was born on June 22 1936 at the Manju Tea Estate near Mirik in Darjeeling district. He studied till Class 9 at Roberts' School, Darjeeling and then joined the army as a jawan in the 8th Gurkha Regiment in 1953. He left the army in 1961. (Dates differ in various press reports. Gheising told INFA that he joined in 1957 and quit in 1966.) A bantam weight-boxer, he also played football and acted in plays. After army service he attended Government College, Darjeeling. He joined the All India Gorkha League, and early in 1968, formed the *Neelo Jhanda Party*, named after its blue flag. In 1973 he demanded recognition of Nepali in the 8th schedule of the Constitution. For some years at this time he declared he was a Nepalese citizen. But in 1977 he stood for election to the Assembly as an independent from Darjeeling, and lost. In 1979 he formed the Prantiya Sabha and demanded a separate state, and in 1980 he launched the Gorkha National Liberation Front.



He wrote his first book, *Kapila*, a book of poems, while he was in the army. Between then and 1976 he wrote 21 books in Nepali and was recognised by the Sahitya Akademi as a writer in that language.

He is the "supremo" of the GNLFF which he runs on a military basis. The 5 Secretary-Generals are selected by him, and are ex-Servicemen. He heads the 22 member executive which is the apex body and also consists largely of ex-servicemen. He nominates all its members and is therefore in total control. His second in command, an ex-Havildar, is Navin Lama and the main GNLFF general secretary is ex-Subedar B.B. Gurung.

Jagatjit Industries Limited

The Spirit of
Excellence

Mis-selling the Nation Through Festivals of India

Festivals Abroad or Craft Bazaars at Home — Which are Relevant

Jaya Jaitly



If one were to delineate the schools of thought and action on "How to get things going", one would be the grand approach and the other the microcosmic one. Great statesmen and visionaries, historians and masters of flamboyance draw a wide angled picture while others begin with a small but concrete project learning, building enlarging according to the realities of the situation and the outcome of many struggles.

When the microcosmic experiment fits into the macrocosmic adventure, positive and harmonious development takes place. When it does not fit, you have a juggernaut like the Festival of India set in motion by our patrons of culture moving from Great Britain to the U.S.A, and now we hear to the U.S.S.R and Japan carrying its performing bears and a bag of tricks along with looms and gold laces to bedazzle the world with their heritage of India. In its wake it is supposed to leave them gasping for more, resulting in increased tourism, booming sales of handicrafts and handlooms and a renewed sense of pride and well being in our hearts. The audience and customers of these far off lands must believe that Indian performers enliven the landscape of India with even more vibrance and vigour than they have been shown. They must presume that Indian craft bazaars flood our markets with exquisite artistry. If only one could believe that India is what surrounded the Eiffel Tower in Paris last year, one's battles would be over. But alas, that cannot be, for one has to live in that real world in which the craftworkers and performers lot is very different indeed.

Festival of India's Inflated Budgets

As the Festival of India attempts to open up markets abroad it has mounted exhibitions and projects in which budgets were raised from Rs. 10 lakhs to Rs. 30 lakhs and eventually even Rs. 50 lakhs and more, to promote crafts and culture. Take the "Aditi" exhibition — an exciting exotic 'happening' where crafts, life and people are in a perpetual state of celebration. The Handicrafts and Handloom Export Corporation (HHEC) has till today given no clear answer as to how much commerce benefiting Indian performers and craftworkers came about. The Golden Eye Exhibition has exquisitely fashioned objects on display. But the exhibition does not touch more than the upper echelon of craftworkers who interact with the upper crust of foreign designers. Prices, production schedules, orders and marketing strategies for craft



Top: Naga dancers in the opulence of the Paris opera

Right: At the Dastakari Haat outside Delhi's Hanuman Mandir. A Modest realistic approach of benefit to craftsmen

products created, displayed or sold during the Festival of India are unavailable to even HHEC officials abroad.

Living Museum Pieces

Crafts people who participated in exhibitions in India in 1978, Britain in 1982, Paris and USA in 1985 are on the way to becoming museum pieces rather than finding themselves deluged with orders for their products or with any improvement in their lifestyles. The *mela* created around the Eiffel Tower in Paris was a swirl of excitement recreating the atmosphere of an Indian bazaar. There were hundreds of little stalls selling inexpensive, attractive craft products purchased from different agencies in India. Coconut water, sugarcane juice dosais, bhel puri and gol gappas added the important touch necessary to attract visitors to a *mela*. Parisians tasted, felt and lived India — it was a good summer holiday. Indians however may well ask what was it all for? For those who supplied crafts it was a one-time transaction — no orders have resulted from stores in Paris nor have Parisians flooded our handicrafts emporia. Is the Taj Hotel, who organised the food, exporting coconuts? If so why is there a coconut glut in the southern states of India where they are being sold at rock bottom prices? Have the bhel puri walis of Chowpatty in Bombay suddenly struck it rich?

Home From the Seven Seas

In contrast to ventures across the seven seas let us study closely a marketing effort right in the heart of the capital of India. A survey of craftsmen and



artisans in and around Delhi revealed that hundreds of weavers, potters, doll makers, chick makers, leather workers, Zari embroiderers and others were living in conditions of extreme difficulty. They had no finances for the purchase of raw materials, no access to direct marketing, no idea of how to adapt and improve their products for a more discerning market. They were identified and organised with the assistance of a grant from the office of the Development Commissioner of Handicrafts in the Ministry of Commerce. It took almost a year to obtain this grant of Rs. 75,000. The next step was to find a place to simply sit and sell or at least meet the customer face to face.

Municipal Lethargy

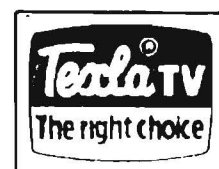
Although space was available in the heart of Connaught Place in the premises adjoining the Hanuman Temple at Baba Kharak Singh marg, it took almost two years to persuade the New Delhi Municipal Committee to allocate the vacant stalls for just one day in the week. The same space is used for a Tuesday bazaar related to the auspicious day of the tem-

plated by the municipal authorities suggesting beautification and improvement of the area which attracted all sections of society as well as tourists. Some of the recommendations were stall complex with overhead shade by growing attractive creepers, facilities for refreshments, streets plays, puppet shows, wandering musicians, etc. Creating an exciting "Mela" or festival atmosphere supportive to the selling of handicrafts. Echoes of the Eiffel Tower Mela in Paris to be sure, but what happens in reality is another matter altogether. When a snacks and tea stall was set up within the area allocated for the Handicrafts bazaar, the NDMC confiscated the goods saying that a refreshment stall could not be part of a bazaar allotted for crafts people. Wandering musicians are still arrested on the streets as part of the Beggars Act. The proposal for planting of creepers and building screens to shut off areas where filth accumulates has not got off the ground for over one and a half years. Does it need a Pupul Jayakar or some other VIP to activate such matters or are craftspeople expected to manage without such facilities in India? What happens to the image, heritage glory and tradition at home?

Govt Funds Only For 'Foren'

While the Festival of India was preceded and supported by an explosion of media publicity, a small experiment at self-reliance like the Dastakari Haat founders without funds to advertise its existence, both for the benefit of other craftsmen who trudge the streets and bylanes of Delhi and could use the bazaar for selling or for customers who otherwise see "Only Vimal" as their new culture through television and the newspapers.

Where is the support to build the lives of craftsmen who live and struggle under our noses? Will the municipal authorities allow them to sell without counting the commercial value of the 10 square feet upon which the artisan sits? Will the departments concerned evolve schemes to support marketing ventures? Will banks give loans without the recommendations of influential persons? **And will the general public raise their voice for the building of India within India and not just as festivals abroad? There is a great difference between illusion and reality.**



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